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**‘Hardened offenders’, ‘respectable prostitutes’ and  
‘good-time girls’: the regulation, representation  
and experience of prostitution in interwar  
Liverpool.**

Kerry Chamberlain

Submitted for the Award of Doctor of Philosophy

June 2013

Keele University

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“To study the history of prostitution itself is to discover that the custom has been continually assailed by attempts at repression and the prostitute herself the object of variable and inconsistent social treatment. She has been offered as a luxury to visiting potentates, treated as a criminal, subjected to extremities of severity, or accorded a sort of semi-recognition. But under whatever circumstances she has survived.”

**[G.M. Hall, ‘Prostitution and Sex Promiscuity in Several Countries at the Present Time’, unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Liverpool, 1932, p.6.]**

## **Abstract**

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Between 1919 and 1936 proceedings for solicitation in Liverpool fell by 98%, with the city having gone from accounting for 17.5% of street prostitution in England and Wales to just 0.3% between these years. So infrequent were arrests against street prostitution by the mid-thirties - for example, in 1934 there were just 10 arrests for solicitation compared to 733 in 1919 - that from 1937 solicitation and brothel offences appeared as an amalgamated category in the local criminal statistical returns. In the national context, proceedings for solicitation fell by 29% between 1919 and 1936, a considerably smaller but nevertheless significant decline. Indeed, this image of decline and improvement seemingly accords with the broader historiography of British prostitution which has tended to conceptualise the interwar period as one of relative stability sandwiched between the upheaval of the First and Second World Wars and emerging from the shadows of Victorian depravity. Crucially, however, in the midst of continued decline prostitution garnered intense political and public attention in Britain throughout the interwar period, crystallised nowhere more palpably than in the establishment of the Street Offences Committee in 1927, the first serious review of prostitution legislation since the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts in the late-nineteenth century. Whilst the past five years have seen the emergence of the first sustained studies of interwar prostitution, the historiography remains geographically limited to London. This thesis offers the first sustained study of prostitution in interwar Liverpool. Through a close reading of Liverpool's court registers it also marks the first critical examination and ultimately challenge of this concept of decline. In moving beyond the smokescreen of improvement it exposes the period as a complex and distinct moment in the history of British prostitution, and one which allows us to make sense of why at the very time the offence rates were showing unprecedented decline prostitution never strayed far from the political, legal and cultural agendas.

## **Acknowledgements**

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This process has, without doubt, been the most rewarding yet challenging of my life (to date). It has required constant self-discipline, self-motivation and self-reflection. Yet, it is one which I could have never embarked upon nor completed without the support, guidance and opportunities given to me by certain individuals. Firstly, to Matt Houlbrook and Andy Davies at the University of Liverpool, who gave me the skills to succeed at undergraduate level and the confidence to pursue post-graduate study I am truly thankful. Together, they nurtured and guided my interest in modern British history into a defined research specialism. To Professor Barry Godfrey and Professor David Gadd at Keele University who gave me this opportunity in the first instance, and provided me with a vibrant and friendly environment to develop as a researcher. They have always so willingly and generously given me their time, their insight and their support. They have trusted me explicitly to make this thesis my own and to work independently, but their expertise and belief in me has made it all the richer. To the AHRC and ESRC who funded me at MA and PhD respectively, I am grateful to you for recognising the value in my research proposals. Without funding I would have never been able to pursue post-graduate study. I am truly grateful to the individuals and organisations above who gave me these opportunities.

Outside of academia I have been blessed with the most supportive and inspiring set of friends. I apologise wholeheartedly for the frequent neglect and the regular moans. You have all kept my feet on the ground, believed in me when often I did not believe in myself, and while we have all taken different paths in life you have all inspired me through your own personal achievements.

Finally, and most importantly, to my family. To my wonderful Grandmothers whose tales of their childhoods in London during the Blitz first ignited my passion for history all those years ago. They have both encouraged and inspired me to chase the opportunities which were never available to them, and to do so with integrity and confidence. To my brother who has had to deal with my 'weirdness' and determination to be 'different', I apologise. To my partner Chris whose relentless patience, faith and pride has kept me going at the hardest of times, not to mention the constant stream of cups of tea. To Chris' family who treated me as one of their own when I was far from home, who always took a genuine interest in what I was doing and gave me unfaltering

support, I will always be thankful. To my father who gave me the spirit and grit to push myself, to question everything and never settle for the 'norm', thank you. To my mother, and my best friend, no words are enough ...

This thesis is dedicated to the loving memory of my Grandfathers.

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## Contents

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Abstract	3
Acknowledgments	4-5
List of Tables, Graphs and Maps	8-9
Glossary of Abbreviated Terms	10-11
Prologue	12-16
<b>Section One: Context</b>	<b>17</b>
Chapter One: Introduction	
(1:0)Introduction	18-30
(1:1)Aims and structure	30-36
(1:2)Literature Review	36-38
(1:3)The British historiography: a preoccupation with the nineteenth century	38-39
(1:4)The Contagious Diseases Acts (C.D. Acts) 1864, 1866 and 1869	39-43
(1:5)Reform and prevention: the historiography of the ‘semi-penal’ sphere	44-47
(1:6)Moving beyond the nineteenth century: prostitution in early twentieth century Britain	47-54
(1:7)Contextualising my research	55-60
Chapter Two: Methodology	
(2:0)Introduction	61-63
(2:1)Methodological approaches to prostitution	63-69
(2:2)My methodological focus	69-70
(2:3)Representations	71
(2:4)Regulation and Control	71-74
(2:5)Experiences	75-79
(2:6)Socio-economic climate	79-81
(2:7)Conclusion	81-82
<b>Section Two: Discourses and Representations</b>	<b>83</b>
Chapter Three: Political and Legal Discourses of Prostitution	
(3:0)Regulation 40d: A sign of things to come?	84-88
(3:1)The path to the SOC	88-98
(3:2)The establishment of the SOC	98-100
(3:3)The law and its execution in Liverpool	100-109
(3:4)Punishments and penalties: Opinions	109-119
(3:5)Punishments and penalties: Experiences	119-124
(3:6)The recommendations of the SOC and beyond	125-128
Chapter Four: Representations – The Causes of Prostitution	
(4:0)Introduction	129-130
(4:1)The economics of prostitution	131
(4:2)Poverty and economic need?	131-137
(4:3)Luxuries and individual greed?	137-144
(4:4)Prostitution, ‘white slavery’, and foreignness	144-146
(4:5)Prostitution and sexual inclination	146-151
<b>Section Three: Regulation</b>	<b>152</b>
Chapter Five: The ‘Official’ Policing of Prostitution in Liverpool	
(5:0)Introduction	153-157
(5:1)The organisation of the LCPF	157-160
(5:2)Policing the ‘professionalized’ professional	160-171
(5:3)Policing the ‘unprofessional’ professional	171-177
(5:4)‘Cleaning the streets’: The sexual geography of prostitution	177-194
(5:5)Corruption	195-200
(5:6)Interpreting the statistics: A culture of concealment?	200-207
(5:7)Policing the ‘good-time’ girl and ‘enthusiastic amateur’	207-215

Chapter Six: The Broader Landscape of Control: A Changing System?	
(6:0)Introduction	216-222
(6:1)The Liverpool Women Police Patrols (LWPP)	222
(6:2)The establishment of the LWPP	222-223
(6:3)The approaches and anticipations of the LWPP	224-227
(6:4)The LWPP and the regulation of prostitution and promiscuity	227-234
(6:5)The Liverpool Branch of the Jewish Association for the Protection of Girls and Women (LJAPGW): A Case of Protecting Jewish Women or Preserving Jewish Reputation?	234-238
(6:6)The LJAPGW and regulating femininity	238-244
(6:7)The cases of Fanny K and Gertrude G	244-248
(6:8)Conclusion	249
<b>Section Four: Experiences</b>	
Chapter Seven: Prostitute Experiences within the CJS	250-251
(7:0) Introduction	251
(7:1)Age of women prosecuted	251-257
(7:2)Age of professional prostitutes	257-261
(7:3)Age of amateur prostitutes	261-265
(7:4)Drunkenness and prostitution	265
(7:5)Professional prostitutes as an offending group	265-274
(7:6)Offending rates and spans: Professionals	274
(7:7)Amateurs charged under the LCA	275-276
(7:8)Amateurs becoming professionals?	276-281
(7:9)‘Cross-offenders’	281-286
(7:10)Resistance and compliance	
Chapter Eight: Prostitution Experiences beyond the CJS	287
(8:0) The dataset	287-293
(8:1) Geographical origins, nationalities and heritage of the dataset	293-294
(8:2) The age of the dataset at entry into and desistance from prostitution	294-296
(8:3) Marriage and prostitution	296-300
(8:4) The dataset as single women	300-305
(8:5) The dataset as married women	305-308
(8:6) Widowhood, separation and desertion in the dataset	308-309
(8:7) Motherhood and prostitution	309-310
(8:8) The dataset as childless women	310-312
(8:9) The dataset as mothers	312-314
(8:10) The economy of interwar Liverpool	314-318
(8:11) The course of Liverpool’s economy	318-324
(8:12) The female labour market	324-328
(8:13) Domestic service	328-329
(8:14) Factory work	329-333
(8:15) Casual work and informal economies	333-335
(8:16) Location at death, life expectancies and concluding thoughts	336-347
Chapter Nine: Conclusion	348-361
Bibliography	

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## **List of Tables, Graphs and Maps**

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### **Chapter One**

**Graph 1:** Number of persons dealt with for the non-indictable offence of prostitution in England and Wales

**Graph 2:** Number of persons proceeded against for the offence of prostitution in Liverpool 1918-1936

**Graph 3:** Number of persons proceeded against for brothel offences in Liverpool 1918-1936

### **Chapter Three**

**Graph 4:** Outcomes of court proceedings for the offence of solicitation dealt with under the TPCA (as a %)

**Graph 5:** Length of prison sentences issued in cases of direct imprisonment without the option of fine (TPCA)

**Graph 6:** Length of prison sentences issues in cases of direct imprisonment without the option of fine (VA)

**Graph 7:** Outcomes of court proceedings for the offence of solicitation dealt with under the LCA (as a %)

### **Chapter Four**

**Table 1:** Alleged causes for becoming prostitutes based upon 669 women in, A. Maude Royden, ed., *Downward Paths: An Inquiry into the Causes Which Contribute to the Making of the Prostitute* (London, 1916).

### **Chapter Five**

**Map 1:** Arrests under the VA and TPCA, 1918

**Map 2:** Arrests under the VA and TPCA, 1926

**Table 2:** Madge Peters' offending comparison, 1926 and 1934

**Table 3:** Sarah Johnson's offending comparison, 1926 and 1934

**Graph 8:** Comparison of the number of persons proceeded against for the offence of street solicitation by professional women and 'unknown' women

**Map 3:** Arrests under the LCA, 1922

### **Chapter Seven**

**Graph 9:** Average age of professional prostitute proceeded against for the offence of street solicitation

**Graph 10:** Age distribution of professional street solicitors proceeded against in 1918

**Graph 11:** Age distribution of professional street solicitors proceeded against in 1926

**Graph 12:** Age distribution of professional street solicitors proceeded against in 1934

**Graph 13:** Comparison between average age of professional prostitute and 'unknown' woman proceeded against for the offence of street solicitation

**Graph 14:** Age cohorts of 'unknown' street solicitors proceeded against in 1926

**Graph 15:** Age cohorts of 'unknown' street solicitors proceeded against in 1934

**Graph 16:** Percentage of professional prostitutes with additional charge for drunkenness when proceeded against for solicitation

**Graph 17:** Offending rates of habitual prostitutes

**Graph 18:** Offending spans of professional prostitutes

**Graph 19:** Collective distribution of seven habitual prostitutes offending (sampled years)

**Graph 20:** Evolution of offending rates over sampled period based upon seven habitual prostitutes

**Graph 21:** Comparison of the offending rates (as a collective %) of 'cross-offenders' before and after taking into consideration charges made under the LCA

**Graph 22:** Comparison of the offending spans (as a collective %) of 'cross-offenders' before and after taking into consideration charges made under the LCA

**Graph 23:** Comparison of point of last offence committed before and after applying the LCA convictions

## **Chapter Eight**

**Table 4:** Percentage of total sample of Merseyside immigrants born in other areas (1929-1930)

**Table 5:** Sex-ratio at different ages, 1931

**Table 6:** Marital state and age of sampled population (Liverpool Household Survey, 1919-1930)

**Table 7:** Length of unemployment among women between ages 16-64, 21 September 1936

**Table 8:** Length of unemployment among women between ages 16-17, June 1936

**Table 9:** Occupational analysis of women on the live file of the unemployment assistance board, 1937

## **Glossary of Abbreviated Terms**

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AMSH	Association for Moral and Social Hygiene
BMD	Births, Marriages and Death (Records)
CC	Chief Constable
CDA	Contagious Diseases Acts
CJS	Criminal Justice System
DORA	Defence of the Realm Act
DP	Downward Paths
DM	Daily Mirror
HoC	House of Commons
HoL	House of Lords
JAPGW	Jewish Association for the Protection of Girls and Women
LC	Liverpool Courier
LCA	Liverpool Corporation Act
LCPF	Liverpool City Police Force
LDPM	Liverpool Daily Post and Mercury
LEE	Liverpool Evening Express
LFP	Liverpool Female Penitentiary
LHH	Liverpool House of Help
LIA	Liverpool Improvement Act
LJAPGW	Liverpool Branch of the Jewish Association for the Protection of Girls and Women
LMI	Liverpool Magdalen Institution
LPRA	Liverpool Preventive and Rescue Association
LVA	Liverpool Branch of the Vigilance Association
LWPP	Liverpool Women Police Patrols
LWPPC	Liverpool Women's Police Propaganda Committee
NVA	National Vigilance Association
PC	Police Constable

PT	The Pilgrim Trust
RCPPP	Royal Commission on Police Powers and Procedure
SM	Stipendiary Magistrate
SOC	Streets Offences Committee
TPCA	Towns Police Clauses Act
TT	The Times
VA	Vagrancy Act
VD	Venereal Disease

## Prologue

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In the early hours of Christmas morning, 1919, two young messengers from the Union Telegraph Cable Company made a grim discovery as they entered Convent Garden, the secluded and narrow passageway which connected Water Street and Chapel Street. “Lying in a pool of blood” was the nude and “severely bruised” body of Elizabeth McDermott, a fifty-four year-old “woman of the unfortunate class” who also went by the name of Isabella Wilson (*LEE*, 27 December 1919). The “cold-blooded”, “fiendish” and “revolting” nature of the murder incited in the initial stages of local press coverage a high degree of compassion towards the way in which McDermott met her death, coming to be known locally as the “Christmas Tragedy” and “The Liverpool Street Tragedy” (ibid 27 December 1919; *LDPM* 29 December 1919). With perhaps more than a hint of preference for the salacious, the *Liverpool Evening Express*, for example, focussed on the depravity of the murderer, recalling the minute and gruesome details in which the perpetrator issued “heavy blows and kicked her about the face,” tore off her clothes with such force that her “corsets were ripped in two,” and carried out additional sickening actions which were too “astounding” to be relayed to the public (*LEE*, 27 December 1919). Consequently, the *Evening Express* surmised two days after the discovery that “the attack was the act of a madman” (ibid 27 December 1919). Similarly, the *Liverpool Daily Post and Mercury*, directed attention towards the “cunning” and “dastardly” conduct of the murderer who took advantage of the probability that “on Christmas-morning in the heart of the business locality of the city there would naturally be great quietness and seclusion” (*LDPM*, 27 December 1919). Judgements relating to McDermott’s occupation as a prostitute and questions referring to her motivations for being out on the streets overnight were omitted in favour of the narratives of tragedy, pity and vulnerability. The naked condition in which she was discovered added to notions of victimhood and defencelessness, whilst the coroner concluded that “exposure to cold” accelerated her death. (*LEE*, 27 December 1919). Beside her body lay a “number of current coins,” perhaps a perverse gesture made by the killer as he left the scene, and a short distance away was “a purse containing a small sum of money,” perhaps a cruel indication that the trade which had led McDermott to her untimely death had not even offered her much financial gain (ibid 27 December 1919).

A few hours before the discovery of McDermott's body, two police constables had come across a young sailor in an intoxicated and "shaky" state at St. James Street Station (*LC*, 13 January 1920). John Brien, twenty-three, was in Liverpool with the steamer *Scotol*, and having been parted from his friend earlier in the evening was awaiting the first morning train to take him back to Herculaneum Dock. Unable to "account for his movement after midnight" the detectives ordered him to return immediately to his ship (*ibid* 13 January 1920). However, by Boxing Day, Brien had gone from being just another inebriated Christmas reveller to the main – and at this stage only – suspect in the McDermott murder case. Recalling their encounter with Brien in light of McDermott's death, the police visited him aboard the *Scotol* on Boxing Day during which time they unearthed "bloodstains" on the shirt he had been wearing and wet patches on his trousers and vest which appeared to "have been recently washed with water" and "sponged" (*ibid* 13 January 1920). Brien was subsequently arrested and came up in Dale Street Court on the 12<sup>th</sup> January 1920, where he claimed that the bloodstains resulted "from a razor-cut received while shaving" and the wet clothing articles were the result of simply being "caught in the rain" (*LDPM*, 13 January 1920). The coroner's jury returned a verdict of "wilful murder against some person or persons unknown," whilst the coroner concluded that "there was absolutely no evidence that Brien was ever in Convent Garden or that the deceased woman had ever been in his company" (*ibid* 13 January 1920).

However, Brien's acquittal had also been influenced in part by the emergence of an additional suspect who had come to the police's attention between the time of his Boxing Day arrest and the start of the inquest following the Christmas recess. The "mystery man from Sheffield", as he came to be known, was first spotted between 3 and 4 o'clock on Christmas morning by a lavatory attendant at Lime Street Station (*LC*, 13 January 1920). Using the facilities to have a wash, the man was noted as having "blood on his hands and wrist," with "scratches down one side of his face" and a "deep wound over one eye" (*ibid* 13 January 1920). He spoke with what the attendant called a "strong Irish accent," was approximately 50 years old, with a "clipped moustache and grey hair," and claimed he had incurred his injuries after being robbed in a Sheffield public house earlier on in the evening, a claim which prompted suspicion given that there had been no trains direct from

Sheffield to Lime Street that night (ibid 13 January 1920). An Inspector at the station also saw the man washing in the lavatory, adding that there was “a lump on the back of his head” (ibid 13 January 1920). The acting sergeant of the station came across the Irish man an hour or so later in the waiting room on platform one, where he said he was “waiting to get a drink having come in from Sheffield” (ibid 13 January 1920). The final witness to encounter the “mystery man” was the night porter of the Granville Hotel, who at around 6 a.m. had been in conversation with a man “rambling from the effects of drink” who had told him “he suddenly took a fancy to come to Liverpool after being robbed” in “The Six Hundred Pub” in Sheffield. (ibid 13 January 1920). All agreed this man was not the same man as Brien.

Interestingly, as the investigation moved to the arena of the court there appeared to be a shift in the way that McDermott was depicted (at least in terms of the particulars of the case the press choose to print). The focus of the preliminary reports - in which the wickedness of the murderer eclipsed and subjugated any notion of McDermott as immoral - gradually subsided as details of her life came to light. The court heard how on the 17<sup>th</sup> December she had come out of Brownlow Hill Workhouse after spending a six-week spell there for treatment to her shoulder “caused by falling off a tramcar” (*LDPM*, 30 January 1919). She returned to the lodging-house in Richmond Row which had been her home for the past four years, immediately reprising her trade in spite of the fact she “was still weak as the result of her accident” (ibid 20 January 1919). The manageress of the lodging-house described her as a lonely figure originating from the Scottish town of Greenock, with “no friends or family” in Liverpool, whilst a fellow lodger recalled how McDermott had told her that “she had been married twice” (ibid 30 January 1919). She was a habitual offender known to frequent the Water Street and Chapel Street areas of the city (the location of her murder), and had “been convicted before the magistrates on many occasions,” although her dealings with the law seemingly did little to deter her from a life of prostitution (ibid 30 January 1919). Although there was never any obvious condemnation of McDermott and her trade (the terms ‘victim’ and ‘tragedy’ were continuously deployed), on focussing upon her precarious lifestyle the newspapers were tacitly implying – and perhaps issuing a warning – that the ‘choices’ made and the spaces

frequented by McDermott had cultivated not only a cycle of poverty and loneliness but had more importantly culminated in her death.

The suspect 'from Sheffield' was never found and the case remains to this day an unsolved murder. After the final court proceedings had been relayed to the public via the local press the following day (January 13<sup>th</sup> 1920), the murder which had gripped Liverpool for a few short weeks over the Christmas period vanished from the newspapers, and, presumably the public imagination, as quickly as it had entered it. Yet, over the course of the investigation, the demise of one prostitute had given rise to a unique instance in which the dark and seedy underworld of Liverpool collided with 'respectable' main society. A side of city life rarely seen by, let alone publicised to, the public at large, the fateful events of that Christmas morning exposed a dangerous geography of a Liverpool where sexual immorality, brutality and drunkenness could converge to alter what was a quiet street of the business district by day into a site of the ultimate crime by night; murder.

Although it is tempting to be seduced by the salacious and macabre nature of the McDermott case – and indeed the element of mystery which still surrounds it as an unsolved murder – it is imperative to exercise a degree of interpretative caution given that this was ultimately an atypical episode. In fact, McDermott's death marks the only case of a prostitute murder in Liverpool over the course of the entire research period. That said, the picture of McDermott's personal and professional life which emerges as a result of the ensuing court proceedings and newspaper coverage does say something indicative of broader prostitute experiences. Similarly, it is proposed that the regulatory bodies McDermott came into contact with and was familiar to as a consequence of her offending career are illustrative of the mechanisms of control Liverpool's interwar prostitutes were liable to experience. The story of McDermott's life and the discourses surrounding her untimely death may also offer a convenient portal into the wider socio-economic climate and cultural conditions of this period which McDermott – and others – had to negotiate, act in response to and/or be judged in accordance to. Whilst the medium through which this very information entered the public domain – namely the written press – denotes one of the main channels through which narratives of prostitution and representations of the prostitute were transmitted more broadly



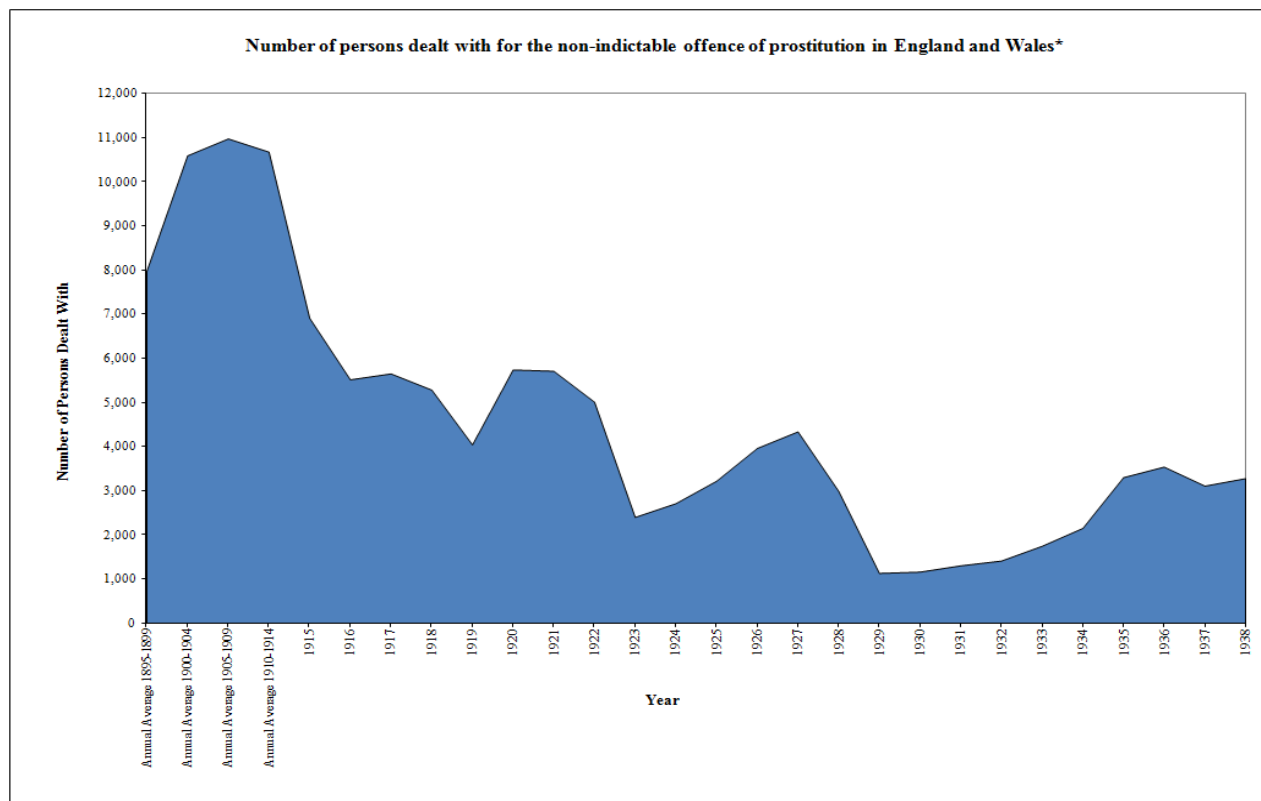
in early twentieth century Britain. And, it is these four lines of enquiry – representations, regulation, experiences and socio-economic climate - which are pursued and critically examined over the course of the investigation and which together form the thematic core and structural basis of the thesis.

# **Section One: Context**

## Chapter One: Introduction

The criminal statistical returns for prostitution offences in interwar Liverpool project an image of a city having successfully departed from late-Victorian estimations of it as the “worst town in England for prostitutes” (Mynott 1995: 431). From the turn of the century up until the eve of the First World War, the solicitation figures had been in steady and continual decline, with proceedings against women dipping from 2,285 in 1898 to 1,208 in 1913. Yet, Liverpool was not only showing signs of statistical ‘recovery’ it was also proving to buck the national trend, which saw proceedings against prostitutes soliciting in England and Wales rise from an annual average of 7,980 for the years 1895 to 1899, to an annual average of 10,754 for the years 1900 to 1914 (see Graph 1).

**Graph 1**

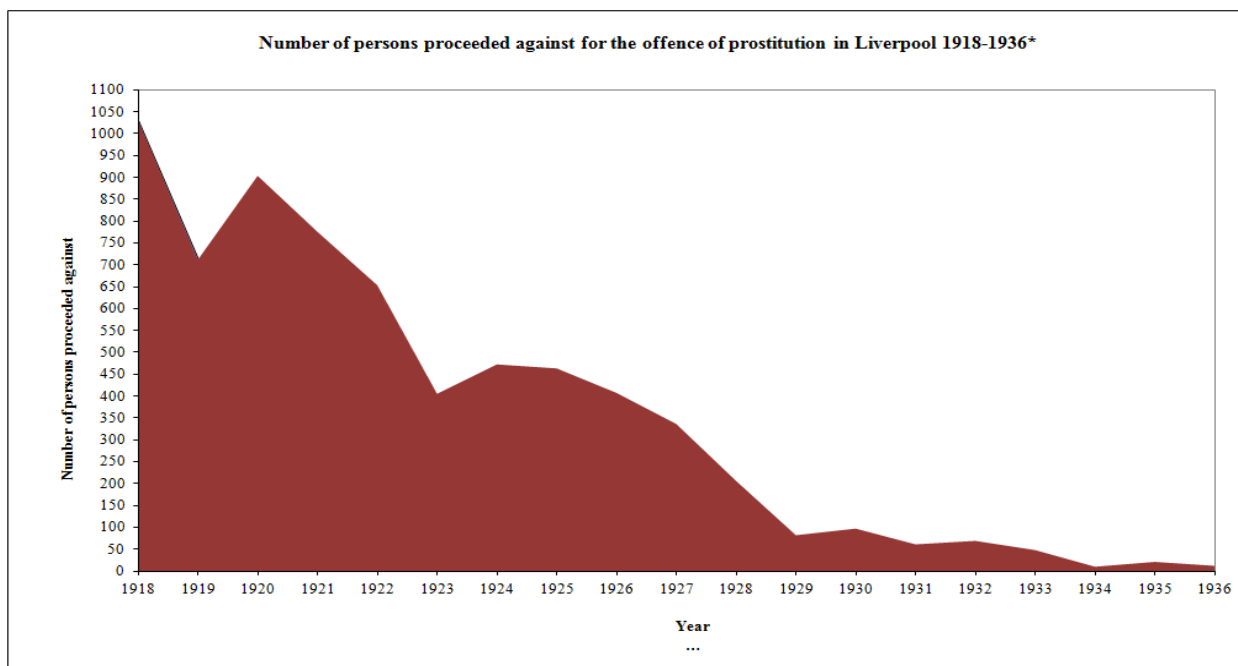


\*Statistics taken from the Parliamentary annual publication, *Criminal Statistics for England and Wales: Statistics relating to Crime, Criminal Proceedings and Coroners' Investigations*.

However, it was the period following the Great War which witnessed the most phenomenal about-turn in Liverpool's prostitution statistics. In 1919 - the first complete year of peace-time – there were 711 proceedings against women for solicitation, a number which peaked for the interwar

period in the following year with 903 arrests, falling to 89 in 1930, and reaching an unprecedented low by 1934 with the number totalling just 10 proceedings (see Graph 2).

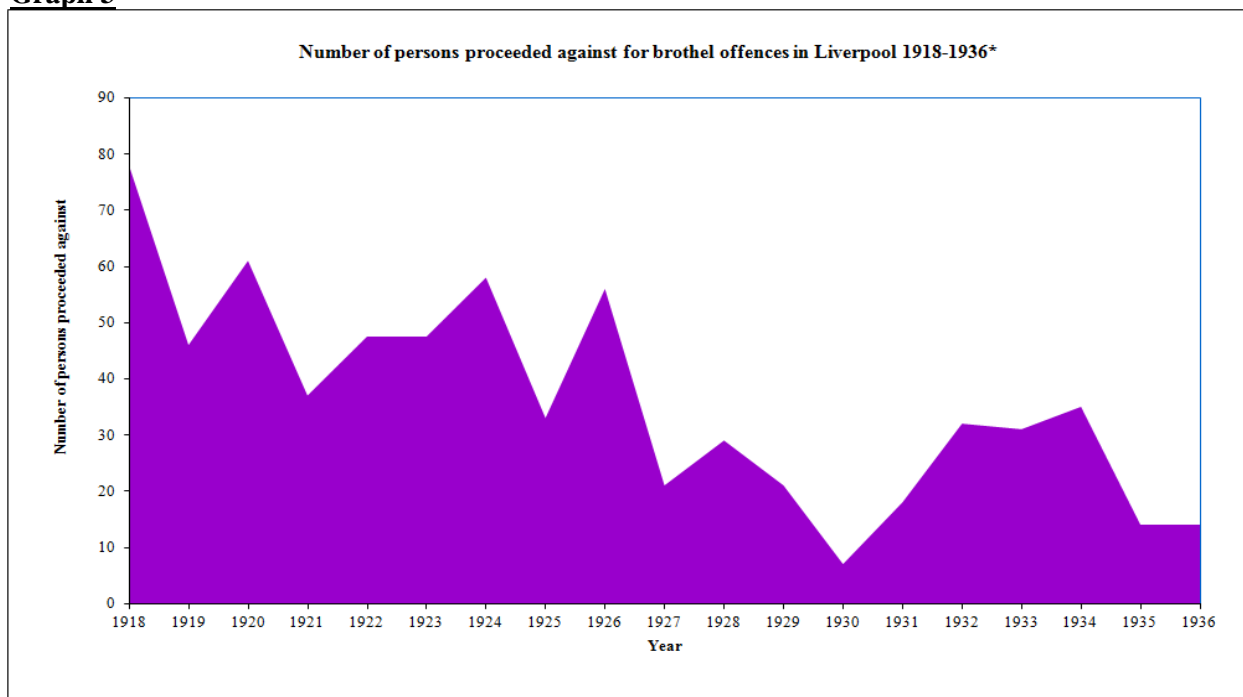
**Graph 2**



\*Statistics based upon returns recorded in the Liverpool City Police Force's annual publication, *Report on the Police Establishment and State of Crime*

The corresponding rates for brothel offences showed a less extreme, but nevertheless encouraging decline, with 46 arrests in 1919, again peaking during peacetime in 1920 with 61, and reaching a low of 7 arrests in 1930 (see Graph 3).

**Graph 3**



\*Statistics based upon returns recorded in the Liverpool City Police Force's annual publication, *Report on the Police Establishment and State of Crime*

As the interwar period drew to a close, an apt indication of the diminished rates was to be found in the newly formatted returns for these offences, with solicitation and brothel offences appearing from 1937 as a merged category (LRO H352/2/WAT/1937). In the space of twenty years, Liverpool had gone from accounting for 7 per cent of prostitution offences in England and Wales in 1919 (17.5 per cent of solicitation and 0.7 of brothel offences), to just 0.5 per cent in 1938. Moreover, in the face of the worldwide economic downturn of the late 1920s and 1930s – which proved particularly devastating for export-based and male-dominated economies such as Liverpool’s – women appeared to be retreating from prostitution rather than turning to it as an alternative form of labour. The Liverpool of the early twentieth century was seemingly worlds apart from the “vile and wicked” port it had been accused of being in the nineteenth century (Cockcroft 1991: 3).

Concomitantly, by the interwar period, institutions which had once been heralded as bastions of the Victorian landscape of prostitution control found themselves being deemed surplus to requirement. The Liverpool Female Penitentiary (LFP), for example, reluctantly closed its doors for the final time on Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> June 1921. Since 1811 it had stood as the City’s only institution whose sole purpose was “reclaiming prostitute women” (LRO 364/FEM/5/1919). It was the owners of the LFP’s Falkner Street property – the Liverpool Corporation – who brought about the closure, arguing that the dwindling number of inmates residing at the penitentiary in recent years signalled a breach of the lease conditions set out on its Falkner Street residence. In 1913, there were approximately 40 women in residence at any given time (LRO 364/FEM/2/1913). By the July of 1919 there were eight women, and by February 1921 this number had again dropped to just two residents, “neither of whom local women” (LRO 364/FEM/5). For the Corporation, these statistics clearly spoke volumes about the municipal need and warranting of such an institution in Liverpool by 1921. ‘Reclaiming prostitute women’, it appears, was no longer a pressing issue on the Town Hall’s agenda. On the face of it, then, these markers pointed to a city that was not only signifying statistical restitution, but one which was willing to loosen the grip of regulatory control.

Indeed, when in January 1928, Liverpool's judicial leaders were called to present evidence to the Street Offences Committee (SOC) – the Home Office inquiry into the state of street prostitution under the existing solicitation laws – a premium was placed upon distancing the city from its Victorian past by emphasising both statistical improvement and key distinctions between the interwar prostitute and her nineteenth century predecessor.<sup>1</sup> When asked by the Committee whether he had “noticed a substantial improvement in the state of your streets in recent years?” the Chief Constable (CC) of the LCPF Mr. Lionel Everett replied, “yes, decidedly” (TNA HO/326/7/10/1928). He went on to explain how, “... my own experience has been for some years, lately anyhow, that the old type of prostitute is gradually going, the type who had no idea of morality at all, who herded together and is usually drunk, who misbehaved in the streets, on all occasions. Now I think age is gradually working her away” (TNA HO/326/7/10/1928). Likewise, Mr. Stuart Deacon the Stipendiary Magistrate (SM) was keen to articulate to the Committee how Liverpool was very much a ‘city in control’ stating that “the reduction in the figures is a real genuine reduction” (TNA HO/326/7/9/1928). So impressed were the Committee by the evidence presented to them from Liverpool that the chairman, Hugh Macmillan, took the time to “congratulate” the representatives for “the work that is being done”, and deduced that there had been “no difficulty apparently in Liverpool in keeping your streets in good order and decency” (TNA HO/326/7/9/1928).

Interestingly, just a few decades earlier the city's criminal justice system (CJS) had received systematic castigation from certain quarters – namely the Liverpool Vigilance Association and local social purity campaigners – for what they deemed to be a laissez-faire approach to the regulation of prostitution (Waller 1981: 106-114). Unlike the repressive model of prostitution control which was adopted in most municipalities in late-Victorian Britain (including Glasgow, Birmingham, Sheffield, Leeds and Manchester), Liverpool favoured a system of management and containment. In 1889, CC William Nott-Bower defended this regulatory approach arguing that it was a “superior system” based upon the pragmatic belief that “brothels and prostitutes have existed

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<sup>1</sup> On 14<sup>th</sup> October 1927, Stanley Baldwin's Conservative government established the SOC, a departmental inquiry into the state of street prostitution under the current solicitation laws. Chaired by the Secretary of State, Sir William Joynson-Hicks, the Committee's report was published in November 1928, *Report of the Street Offences Committee*, Cmd. 3231 (1928).

in all ages, and the evils in connection therewith can be checked and moderated, but cannot be *suppressed*” (Nott-Bower 1926: 141. Italics in original). Using this system ensured the police had a sophisticated and detailed knowledge of the sexual geography of the city. The irregularity with which proceedings were taken against immoral houses, for example, meant that the police benefited from brothels being located within a few ‘special’ streets – as oppose to “driving them into neighbourhoods unaffected by the evil” – a practicality which enabled ease of regular surveillance and containment of immorality (ibid: 134). Arguably the most fervent of critics towards the ‘Liverpool system’ was the Reverend Richard Armstrong, whose 1890 pamphlet, *The Deadly Shame of Liverpool*, set about condemning the city’s authorities for accelerating rather than moderating the prostitution problem (LRO H252/ARM/1890). He argued, that in the municipalities of Glasgow, Manchester and Sheffield where the suppressive approach was favoured, “it is comparatively difficult for a young man to find prostitutes” (LRO H252/ARM/1890). By contrast, he claimed that the ‘soft’ policing of prostitution in Liverpool had cultivated a city which enticed prostitutes from all over the country, operating as a sanctuary for vice:

“In Manchester, Birmingham, and other great towns a life of prostitution has serious drawbacks from police interference. Here it has very few. Naturally, therefore, these other towns supply a continuous stream of these unhappy creatures, and of the brothel keepers too, who prefer immunity in Liverpool to restriction and interference elsewhere” (LRO H252/ARM/1890).

In the space of less than forty years then, Liverpool’s model of prostitution management and containment (which as we shall see was still in operation by the interwar period) had gone from being the source of much local agitation to being heralded on the national stage as a system which was producing unprecedented results.

Certainly, this notion that the interwar years represented a hiatus of sorts in prostitution, a period of comparative stability and restraint sandwiched between the upheaval of the First and Second World Wars and emerging from the shadows of Victorian depravity, is a tempting one to

believe. In fact, through their failure in the most part to engage with this era, scholars of prostitution – and crime historians more broadly – have tended to inadvertently reproduce this feeling, a point I will return to later in this chapter. By considering the ways in which prostitution was practiced, regulated, represented and received in Liverpool specifically - and the national context more generally - this thesis argues that the interwar period marked a particularly vibrant and distinct episode in the history of British prostitution. For example, far from a departure in municipal, state and public concern, anxieties coalescing around prostitution gained renewed, intensified and sustained weight during the years 1918 to 1939. Of course, as the social scientist Gladys Hall noted in 1932, “throughout history, the existence of prostitution has produced repeated waves of uneasiness” (Hall 1932: 5). ‘Uneasiness’ in the context of interwar Britain, I argue, referred not simply to sentiments of disquiet elicited by the sexual transactions, or indeed the mere existence of prostitutes – although this invariably forms an important line of my enquiry – but rather it assumed a more complex significance. It spoke, for instance, of public outrage at what was periodically viewed as the heavy-handed policing of prostitution, of a crisis of legitimacy in the solicitation laws, and scepticism regarding the expanding parameters of feminine sexual vice and the appropriateness of increasing state intervention in matters of private morality. Indeed, a measure of just how pronounced such concerns were by the interwar period can be seen in the establishment of the Street Offences Committee (SOC) in 1927, which marked the only serious review of prostitution legislation since the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts (CD Acts) in the 1880s, and the first review to focus upon the solicitation laws (see chapter three). This investigation is framed by the desire to deconstruct the material and discursive processes through which this marginal – and according to the criminal statistical returns – declining act came to be such a contested and contentious terrain. In such a way, it follows the theory forwarded by Stallybrass and White who have argued “that which is socially peripheral is so frequently symbolically central” (Stallybrass and White 1986: 278). This investigation seeks to illuminate how and why in the midst of the declining criminal statistical returns prostitution not only became ‘symbolically central’ but also politically, legally and culturally central.



In order to make sense of this state of disjuncture which is beginning to unfold, I firstly turn to the field of the history of sexuality where scholars have typically been more forthcoming in their considerations of interwar Britain. As Weeks (1981) has argued, the social mood between the wars was highly complex, and thus “to conceptualise the whole period as transitional is to avoid a whole catalogue of difficult problems – and to assume that [the] ascent to liberalism” followed a straightforward trajectory (Weeks 1981: 199). In this climate, the politics of sexuality was at once post-Victorian yet still “clearly pre-permissive,” informed as much by its “exposure to the felt needs of the time” as by the “series of moral codes and practices” inherited from the nineteenth century (ibid: 200). This, I argue, is a particularly useful way to think about, and understand, prostitution in the context of interwar Britain. The notion of paradox which Weeks draws upon to capture the mood of interwar society is a trope which is constantly revisited throughout this thesis, and as I posit, prostitution found itself caught up in, guided by, and conducive to, this discordant state. Understanding this curious – and often uneasy – blend between the traditional and the modern, the Victorian and the progressive, is key to understanding the route of prostitution - its practice, regulation and representation - as well as determining why in the face of such outwardly encouraging signs (as outlined above) it was identified as a ‘hot topic’. Indeed, the evidence forwarded over the course of this investigation suggests that it is far more useful and appropriate to talk about interwar prostitution in terms of this ‘struggle’ between change and continuity rather than exclusively through the lens of decline, whilst such an approach lends itself to a critical examination of just how far and fast prostitution offences in interwar Liverpool were actually declining. In turn, it is contended that a close study of this ‘peripheral’ act may in fact provide us with a deepened understanding of how processes of social and cultural change were negotiated more broadly between the wars. In this sense there are striking parallels to be made with the approach adopted by Rosen in her study of prostitution in Progressive Era America (Rosen 1982). Rosen has argued that prostitution was constructed as a ‘symbol of an age’, a topic which was seized upon as a way of “expressing discontent and anxiety about changes that were corrupting and invading traditional American society,” namely rapid industrialisation, urbanisation, commercialisation and immigration (ibid: 40). For Rosen, this quest for social order in an increasingly uncertain and unfamiliar world “offers a unique opportunity to make a series of

inquiries into prostitution and the culture and society of early twentieth-century America” (ibid: xiii). Set against post-war reconstruction, imperial decline and economic downturn, and amidst fears that the war had served to alter traditional gender roles, prostitution (its practice, regulation and representation) assumed a symbiotic relationship to the social, cultural, economic and political backdrop of interwar Britain. For many interwar commentators prostitution became a vehicle through which they could benchmark the shifting world around them. For historians of interwar prostitution, such narratives, thus, present an opportunity to move beyond a micro-study of feminine transgression and to engage in larger issues at the macro level (see Gilfoyle 1999: 140). It is hardly surprising, therefore, as Cocks and Houlbrook have recently lamented, that historians of sexuality find that more often than not they “are writing about anything *but* sex”(Cocks and Houlbrook 2006: 2).

So, it is contended that Liverpool’s declining statistics did not necessarily reflect a relative or ‘genuine’ reduction in the practice of prostitution but rather a series of shifts in the physical, spatial and criminal identity of interwar prostitutes. In interwar Liverpool categorisations of the prostitute were - in spite of the retracting statistics – both branching out and transforming. In this climate, the archetypal Victorian street-walker or ‘professional’ existed alongside the re/emerging ‘modern’ figure of the ‘amateur’. The ‘professional’ and ‘amateur’ were distinguishable from one another not necessarily by what they did, but by why they were perceived to do it. Dr. A. Flexner defined the ‘professional’ as someone “who habitually or intermittently has sex relations for money or other mercenary consideration” (Flexner 1914: 7). Hall – one of the earliest females to graduate from the newly established Department of Social Science at the University of Liverpool – defined the ‘amateur’ as a woman who was “ready to have promiscuous relations for gifts or pleasures, or even for no external reward” (Hall 1932: 12). As we shall see, anxieties surrounding the ‘amateur’ which had surfaced - or resurfaced (see section 1:7) - in the Great War gained a degree of permanency during the interwar period, and proved to have far reaching implications upon how prostitution more broadly was talked about, regulated and received. So, for example, as attention increasingly came to focus upon the ‘amateur’, understandings of prostitution as a commercial and economic act became redundant in favour of ‘sexualising’ the prostitute and her trade. Locally, Liverpool’s CJS

was extending its legislative gaze to encompass the ‘amateur’ or ‘unknown woman’ soliciting, a shift which was consolidated in Section 416 of the Liverpool Corporation Act enacted in 1921. Crucially, however, solicitation offences dealt with under the LCA did not appear within the city’s criminal returns for prostitution, and thus whilst professional prostitution may well have been on the decline the trend of the official statistics fails to illuminate the route of ‘amateur’ prostitution. This has a particular significance given that both nationally and locally ‘amateur’ prostitution was perceived to be statistically surpassing ‘professional’ prostitution. Indeed, as we shall see in chapter five, from 1926 onwards the number of women dealt with for solicitation offences under the LCA consistently outweighed those dealt with under the official battery of prostitution legislation, known as the solicitation laws.

Yet, coinciding with this move towards amateur prostitution was an understanding that this period also witnessed the inception of a growing professionalization and/or commercialisation of prostitution. So, when Everett was relaying his observations to the SOC regarding how the ‘old-type’ of street-walker was ‘gradually going,’ he was not suggesting that this necessarily marked the end of professional prostitution in Liverpool but rather the replacement of this type of ‘immoral’ prostitute with what he deemed to be “well-appointed” and “respectable” prostitutes (TNA HO/326/7/10/1928). The sexual geography of Liverpool altered accordingly as these ‘respectable’ prostitutes increasingly used spaces such as the cinema, theatre, hotels, and their own flats or living quarters to ply their trade “more so than the streets” (LRO H352/2/WAT/1928). Technological advances such as improved street lighting and the growing use of the motorcar were also credited for both deterring prostitutes from using the streets as a commercial space and moving prostitution to the peripheries of the city where it was easier to subvert the gaze of the police. This spatial movement was also accompanied by a perceived improvement in the public conduct and appearance of professionals to create a sense that interwar prostitutes were increasingly blending into the cityscape rather than polluting it. As I go on to argue in chapter five, this move towards the professionalization of prostitution accorded with the LCPF’s system of management and containment, and thus it is hardly surprising that the criminal statistics began to drop at a time when

professionalization enabled the city's 'well-appointed' prostitutes to concomitantly circumvent the law with greater aptitude, and also necessitate less legal intervention.

However, at the same time as professionals were becoming less public, amateur prostitutes were seemingly filling this void, thus the methods of regulation essentially remained governed by the same objectives but the subject changed, a shift which further tested the legitimacy of police policy and questions the extent of decline. And, as the evidence forwarded over the course of this investigation indicates, the archetypal professional street-walker did persist into the interwar period, albeit in smaller numbers than previously experienced within the city. In fact, in many ways it was such women who refused or failed to adapt both physically, spatially and behaviourally to this new form of professionalized prostitution that were most severely dealt with by the CJS. Underpinning all these points is the notion that in interwar Liverpool the vice of prostitutes was constructed around their visibility and identifiableness to the public at large as oppose to necessarily their actual or anticipated transgression. This investigation, therefore, invariably focuses upon street prostitution and the two main figures of interwar street prostitute – the professional street-walker ('hardened offender') and the amateur prostitute ('the good-time girl') – although instances of brothel based and/or off-street prostitution are periodically highlighted via the figure of the professionalized professional (the 'respectable prostitute') in order to articulate the disparate ways in which these forms of prostitution were dealt with. For the purpose of clarity, this investigation uses the contemporary distinctions outlined by Hall and Flexner above when referring to the professional (both the 'hardened offender' and the 'respectable prostitute') and the amateur ('the good-time girl'). Crucially, this investigation also seeks to reflect the fluidity which existed in the popular, political and legal terminology between these 'shades' of prostitution and the prostitute. For example, CC Everett's official definition of the amateur in his 1928 annual report closely emulated that of Hall's, describing them as those young women who engage with the opposite sex "for the sake of being treated to drink, refreshment, or entertainment than for actual immorality" (LRO H352/2/WAT/1928). As noted above, Everett recorded in his 1928 entry that the number of arrests made against "this sort of female" in 1927 was 411 (ibid). When it came to detailing the decline of such arrests from 411 to 256 between 1927 and 1928, in his 1929 entry Everett referred to those who came under these figures as the "immoral women who cannot be

proved to be common prostitutes” (LRO H352/2/WAT/1929). The point is that definitions of the prostitute could and did flex significantly even when emanating from the same person, as in this case where in the space of a year the amateur altered from a frivolous but not necessarily immoral woman to a woman who to all intent and purposes was a prostitute but had not yet been legally defined as a common prostitute. And, as we shall go on to see, given that the LCA was used concurrently to actively legislate against women known to be common prostitutes, paying attention to the fluidity between the definitions facilitates a more critical analysis and convincing account of prostitution in interwar Liverpool. In this climate, Liverpool’s CJS were faced with the challenge of negotiating an increasingly complex terrain of prostitution. However, Liverpool’s CJS were also playing a central role in defining and at times conveniently blurring these interwar definitions of the prostitute and thus were actively contributing to this complex terrain of prostitution. These are the nuances of prostitution which emerge when the analytical lens is broad enough to extend its gaze beyond the smokescreen of statistical improvement.

Whilst the closure of the LFP may initially signal a slackening of regulatory control within the city, the findings of this study go on to argue that in actuality it spoke of both a broader diminution within the reformatory sphere, and a transforming post-Victorian landscape of ‘unofficial’ and/or ‘quasi-official’ prostitution control whereby emphasis was now firmly rooted with prevention as oppose to reaction. Thus, the methods and spaces of control altered accordingly, as organisations patrolled the city’s streets surveying women’s public behaviour with the hope that they could deter and/or intercept before the point of transgression, rather than responding after the point of transgression as had traditionally been the case with reform. In Liverpool, as nineteenth century institutions such as the Penitentiary were disappearing distinctly twentieth century organisations such as the Liverpool Women’s Police Patrols (LWPP) and the Liverpool branch of the Jewish Association for the Protection of Girls and Women (LJAPGW) were carving out a new style of prostitution control which sought to regulate and rehabilitate prostitutes within the community rather than dealing with them within a penal environment as had transpired under the reformatory model of control. Operating outside the sphere of legislative control, such organisations were in many ways more suitable candidates in the regulation of the amateur prostitute given that

historically attempts to legislatively control amateurs had incited much public and political agitation (see chapter three). Therefore, as we shall see, it was probably no coincidence that an interesting dynamic emerged at this time whereby amateur regulators were at the fore of policing amateur prostitutes. Yet, it would be misleading to suggest that the ‘unofficial’ regulation of prostitutes in the early twentieth century was entirely dislocated from the reformatory model of control, nor that these ‘new’ regulators were completely distinct from their nineteenth century predecessors. As was the case with reform, the sphere of ‘unofficial’ regulation continued to be chiefly saturated by female regulators, largely drawn from the same strata of society as they had traditionally come from, and thus in many ways represented a continuation of class-based or inter-class control which had flourished in the nineteenth century. Like their Victorian counterparts, early twentieth century regulators did not intend for their programmes of control to reach or deal with all types of prostitution or prostitute, instead key distinctions continued to be made between the old and the young, the salvageable and the unsalvageable, and the deserving and the undeserving. And, whilst the spaces of control had altered considerably by the interwar period, the pursuit to re-educate and retrain ‘fallen women’ in matters of feminine respectability and sexual morality remained central to the aims of the unofficial regulators.

As the realm of unofficial or quasi-official control was modifying, and Liverpool’s CJS was negotiating new – and shaky – grounds with their attempts to legally curtail the amateur, the complex system of national and local statutory legislation used to deal with street solicitation by professional prostitutes – known as the solicitation laws – remained distinctly Victorian in origin and style. Largely unaltered and unchallenged since their conception in the early and mid nineteenth century, a number of high-profile court cases in the 1920s, as well as lobbying from prominent pressure groups and anxieties emerging from within the CJS itself, focused public, political and legal attention on the minutiae of the written law and its subsequent implementation. The appointment of the SOC was in many ways a manifestation of, and platform for, debates regarding the appropriateness of this body of Victorian legislation in the early twentieth century. As we shall see, the struggle between continuity and change was patently and painstakingly played out over the course of its proceedings, although ultimately no legislative amendments were

secured. Yet, it would be inaccurate to assume that as a consequence neither the debates leading up to the SOC nor the inquiry itself had any bearing upon the ways in which prostitutes were policed and punished in the ensuing years. Concerns regarding the legislative treatment of professional prostitutes, for example, which had garnered a high degree of publicity throughout the 1920s and formed a key component of the SOC discussions, were widely understood to have led to the growing tendency for police inertia from the late 1920s, as attempts to avoid accusations of heavy-handed policing translated into a sharp dip in the statistical returns well into the 1930s. In such a way, the declining criminal statistics were not only symptomatic of alterations in the practice of prostitution, but were also a reflection of how prostitutes were legislatively regulated, or not regulated as the case may be. In Liverpool, it was no coincidence that, statistically, prostitution offences by professionals had almost completely disappeared by the mid-1930s given that at this very time a culture of concealment was emerging whereby the CJS were increasingly dealing with women who had long and prolific offending histories as prostitutes under the pretext of alternative public disorder legislation, most notably as drunkards and as ‘unknown’ women soliciting under the LCA. This, it is contended, goes some way to explain why in the midst of the economic depression prostitution offences were at an all time low. Prostitutes, as we shall see, were not necessarily disappearing from Liverpool’s streets but they were disappearing from the official criminal statistical returns for prostitution offences.

### **(1:1) Aims and structure**

In light of the above discussions, the overarching aim of this investigation is to illuminate, critically examine, and, ultimately make sense of the paradoxical situation which arose in interwar Liverpool specifically and the national context more broadly whereby the declining criminal statistical returns for prostitution offences failed to both fully supplant contemporary anxieties and accord with the route interwar prostitution actually unfolded along. To achieve this, it is necessary to both question just how far and fast prostitution offences were actually declining and to establish why exactly the official criminal statistics were signalling decline. Indeed, Slater’s recent research on interwar

prostitution has begun to convincingly challenge the extent of decline in the context of London, focussing upon how a series of political, public and policing pressures converged to create a false – or at least exaggerated - impression of decline (see Slater 2007b: 53-74; *ibid* 2010: 332-357). As Slater has noted, “further research is needed into the police court registers to assess the extent of illicit sexual activity, including paid sex” (*ibid* 2010: 355). A quantitative and qualitative analysis of Liverpool’s police court registers forms a central part of my enquiry, and, I argue, it is this aspect of my methodological framework which enables my research to consider how prostitution practices and prostitute experiences featured in and/or challenged the equation of decline, a factor which is largely absent from Slater’s investigation. By critically examining the narrative of decline a picture emerges which vividly departs from the notion that the interwar period represented a ‘pause’ or ‘respite’ in the broader trajectory of Britain’s prostitution history. In turn, we may begin to question some of the dominant assumptions about feminine sexuality and female crime in the context of interwar Britain more broadly.

As the focus and content of these initial discussions have indicated, this thesis is guided by four key thematic strands of enquiry – representations, regulation, experiences and socio-economic climate – which together largely form and inform the structure of this thesis. However, before the thematic part of this investigation gets underway, the first section is concerned with introducing, locating and rationalising my research within the context of the wider historiography, and in doing so introduces the sub-aims of this study. This introductory chapter and chapter two are intended to stand as an extended dialogue and form the first section of this thesis entitled context. The latter part of this chapter offers an overview of the evolution of prostitution within the historical record, paying particular attention to the British historiography and specifically research based upon the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It charts the key themes, arguments and theories which have arisen within the literature as well as looking at the geographical and chronological range of the historiography. In doing so, it highlights areas of research which have dominated the literature and more importantly areas which remain under-researched. Subsequently, this chapter introduces three key aims of this study which all endeavour to reconcile some of these gaps in knowledge which have emerged. Chapter two moves on to consider the methodological trends which have dominated



the historical study of prostitution, and in doing so it frequently extends the gaze beyond the context of Britain. Following a discussion of the key methodological difficulties facing scholars of prostitution and the subsequent imbalances in approaches which have surfaced, I introduce the rationale behind my methodological framework, placing a particular importance upon the ways in which my research attempts to negotiate and reconcile some of these broader limitations.

Section two examines the key discourses and representations of prostitution in interwar Britain and Liverpool. Chapter three is concerned with chronologically charting the key political and legal discourses of prostitution at both the national and local level. The first part of this chapter considers the enactment of Section 40d of the Defence of the Realm Act (DORA). It pays particular attention to the ways in which the War had served to focus and position anxieties concerning individual sexuality, morality and conduct as a matter of national importance and urgency, arguing that this proximity between the individual and societal body consolidated in 40d did not dissipate with the Armistice but went on to underpin the programme of interwar reconstruction. More specifically, it proposes that the language in which 40d was framed, the coverage of who it sought to control, and the agitations it provoked, in many ways acted as a prelude to the route political and legal conceptualisations of prostitution and the prostitute unfolded along over the course of the interwar period. The next part of this chapter moves on to explore the path which led to the establishment of the SOC in 1927, placing particular emphasis on moments of political debate, political lobbying, and legislative review and amendments, as well as the series of high-profile prostitution related policing scandals (largely in London) which served to focus public and political attention on the legislative treatment of prostitutes. The focus then shifts once more in order to look at the proceedings of the SOC. Whilst the recent historiography of interwar prostitution has worked to refocus attention on this moment of governmental review which has traditionally been overshadowed by the Wolfenden Committee of 1954-57 (culminating in the Street Offences Act, 1959), the literature has tended to privilege the evidence forwarded by prominent pressure groups at the national level. This investigation departs from the literature in that it places a premium upon the evidence presented locally from Liverpool's front-line regulators. I argue such an approach is far more relevant to a study of provincial street prostitution than that which charts the history of organisations which may well have been politically prominent but had little impact upon, or

experiences of, the daily regulation of prostitution at the local level. Moreover, it is argued that this approach has a particular importance given that, as we shall see, no legislative amendments actually arose from the recommendations forwarded by the SOC, and thus power remained very much in the hands of the local CJS's and the regulatory bodies. It was, invariably, the policies and actions of the police, the courts, and the unofficial and/or quasi-official regulators in the local context which most closely impacted upon Liverpool's prostitutes, as opposed to the actions of central government, politicians and/or national organisations such as the AMSH. Chapter three concludes by briefly considering political and legal narratives of prostitution in the post-SOC era. It is argued that whilst prostitution largely fell off the political agenda from the late twenties onwards, the periodic spotlight which was shone on prostitution during the thirties suggests that the SOC had done little to supplant concerns regarding the policing and judging of interwar prostitutes. In fact, it is contended that in fashioning a culture of police inertia from the late twenties (which went on to translate into a sharp dip in the criminal statistical returns for prostitution offences nationally), the SOC had worked to gloss over the more enduring problems of prostitution control and mask the extent of prostitution remaining on Britain's and Liverpool's streets. And, if prior to the SOC criticism had largely been weighted against the heavy-handed policing of prostitution, then by the thirties the police were more likely to incite accusations of toleration and indifference.

Chapter four moves away from the political and legal domain to look at how exactly prostitution was conceptualised, represented and responded to within interwar society more broadly. The main part of this chapter examines some of the dominant causes and problems associated with prostitution, ranging from individual culpability to structural and gendered inequalities, and from concerns over the medical contagion and moral corruption of hegemonic society to the appropriateness of state intervention and the remit of legal control. Whilst the focus of chapter three and four differ, it is argued that there are many parallels to be made between the political and public domains, most notably the increasing tendency for representations of the prostitute to be framed by the dichotomies of professional and amateur prostitution, a dichotomy which came to increasingly inform regulatory responses to prostitution at this moment.

Section three examines regulatory responses to prostitution in the context of Liverpool. Chapter five focuses upon the LCPF's front-line policing of prostitution, in doing so reconstructing the process or processes of official control before the point of judging in the court arena as illuminated in chapter three. It is contended that whilst a broad policy of management and containment was favoured by the LCPF, the ways in which this policy was executed varied significantly in accordance to the different forms of prostitution and prostitute identified within this locality; namely the 'respectable' prostitute, the 'hardened offender' and the 'good-time' girl. In light of these nuances regarding prostitute and policing activity, the validity of the official criminal statistical returns are critically examined, whilst a closer analysis of the individual offending trajectories of prostitutes suggests that by the 1930s the LCPF were pursuing a culture of concealment in order to actively distort the rate of prostitution offences recorded. This chapter also revisits the trope of police corruption which was explored in the national context in chapter three and argues that whilst it is probable that there was an active manipulation of the statistics, there was little evidence of institutional corruption in terms of how beat officers dealt with prostitutes on the streets. This, however, is not to say that the personal vagaries of constables did not at times result in the arbitrary policing of prostitutes as we shall see by consulting the disciplinary records of the LCPF.

In chapter six the focus shifts to consider the unofficial landscape of prostitution control in interwar Liverpool. By chronicling the work of two key organisations – the LWPP and the LJAPGW – I explore how a growing emphasis upon prevention worked to bolster the broader impression of decline as the unofficial sphere increasingly emulated regulatory tactics which had traditionally been the preserve of the police, most notably street patrolling. By examining how exactly this shift worked to alter the experiences of women who fell under the gaze of the unofficial regulators it is contended that whilst such organisations may not have had the legislative powers of the LCPF they were far from powerless. Finally, it is suggested that broader challenges facing these organisations at this juncture – the LJAPGW were working to preserve their existence at a time when donations from the global Jewish community were waning and the LWPP were

campaigning for the inauguration of women police – meant that prostitution was frequently utilised as a powerful lobbying tool, ensuring that it never strayed far from the local political agenda.

Section four represents the final, and arguably, the most important thematic layer of this investigation. Not only does its focus upon prostitute experiences seek to reconcile one of the key methodological limitations levelled against the existing literature, but by giving Liverpool's interwar prostitutes the final platform it neatly ties together each thematic section of this investigation. Chapter seven examines prostitute experiences within the CJS. By capitalising on the fact that the petty session registers from interwar Liverpool have survived in their entirety, it offers a detailed examination of prostitute experiences at the group level. It looks at age, drunkenness rates, offending rates and offending spans. It is concerned with both understanding key characteristics of these women as an offending group and also using these findings to revisit and critically re-examine some of the dominant themes which have emerged over the course of this investigation. So, for example, were prostitutes really retreating from prostitution at the rate in which the criminal statistics returns suggest? Was amateur prostitution really engaged in by young girls and women, and similarly was professional prostitution the domain of older offenders? Chapter eight employs the methodological technique of 'whole-life analysis' in relation to a sampled set of prostitutes to gain a deepened understanding of individual experiences both within and beyond the CJS. By plotting women's personal stories – marital status, occupations, nationalities, childbearing, life expectancies and family relations – against their offending histories – points of entry into and departure from prostitution, offending rates, patterns and spans – it seeks to both contextualise offending experiences within broader life courses and critically examine contemporary assumptions and subsequent scholarly arguments regarding who these women were, why and when they engaged in prostitution, and with what consequences to their personal lives and societal status. Does my 'whole-life analysis' of prostitutes, for example, challenge or support the early twentieth century belief that prostitution was a lifestyle rather than an occupation, and one which had been driven by personal pathology, feeble-mindedness and depravity as oppose to economic hardship and lack of alternative employment options? Similarly, do the life experiences of these women corroborate with or depart from scholarly arguments that these women were

marginalised from society and their communities, beyond the realms of femininity and the parameters of marriage and motherhood? These are all the nuances of personal experiences which are only illuminated when the methodological focus is broad enough to look beyond activity within the regulatory sphere, but interestingly only has significance when it is analysed in conjunction with the regulatory data.

Throughout this section the economic and cultural backdrop is surveyed in order to understand the climate that the prostitute negotiated, acted in response to and/or was judged in accordance to. By offering a more nuanced analysis of the world which she lived, worked, married, procreated, rested and ultimately survived in, it seeks to avoid impulsively reproducing the rhetoric of sexual deviancy, criminality and marginality which typically formed contemporary – and at times forms scholarly – discourses of prostitution and the prostitute. In turn, by illuminating factors such as Liverpool's precarious labour market it brings to the surface certain points of disjuncture which have emerged over the course of this investigation. Were women really retreating from prostitution in such high numbers at the very time female unemployment levels peaked in interwar Liverpool? Why in spite of the devastating economic conditions of the period did the regulators – and wider social commentators both nationally and locally – largely fail to understand prostitution in terms of financial necessity and survival, instead favouring narratives of personal pathology and immorality? It is this final thematic layer which seeks to illuminate the 'historical' voice of Liverpool's interwar prostitutes, one which – as we shall see – becomes all the more powerful when considered in light of what politicians, police, magistrates and commentators had to say about her.

As the structure delineated above indicates, a framework has been constructed which allows the focus to shift between the national, local, group and individual levels. Subsequently, it is possible to survey not only how this category of feminine crime was discussed, conceptualised and represented nationally, regulated in the local context, and experienced by the offenders themselves as an offending group and as individuals, but also to examine how each of these levels materially and discursively impacted upon each other. For example, how far do responses to and representations of prostitution in Liverpool corroborate with or depart from political, legal and

popular discourses on the national stage? Were regulatory responses to prostitution shaped in response to prostitute experiences and vice versa? How were offending practices motivated by or judged in accordance to the social and economic climate? What can the study of feminine criminality reveal about the gendered, social and political ideals of interwar society? And, how far do the offending and personal histories of Liverpool's interwar prostitutes add weight to or challenge historical and scholarly associations between prostitution and marginality, subordinate femininity and sexual deviancy? As Scott has famously contended, historians of marginality should not only seek to 'recover' the histories of 'marginal' groups, cultures and phenomena, but seek to critically examine how exactly "categories like marginal/central, normal/abnormal are made in the first place" (quoted in Cocks and Houlbrook 2006: 6).

### **(1:2) Literature review**

"The oldest profession in the world seems to be the only one to have escaped history" (Corbin 1990: xvi).

Between the time when Corbin's above comment first came to print in his native language of French in 1978, and the time in which it was translated in 1990 for the English speaking world, the relationship between prostitution and history had altered so much that his claim must have seemed somewhat both outdated and overly pessimistic. Indeed, the American scholar Gilfoyle had noted in his comprehensive historiographical review from 1999 how prior to 1980 "few historians considered prostitution an important topic" (Gilfoyle 1999: 117). Along with chapter two, the following sections seek to illuminate how over the course of the past three decades the historiographical tide has turned so much so that no longer does the study of prostitution occupy the peripheries of academia but has come to be informed by and inform mainstream scholarship. Not only can this historiographical shift be seen in the number of monographs, articles and theses regularly emerging, but also in the continued extension of the chronological and geographical coverage considered, and the theoretical epistemologies and methodological techniques engaged with. Collectively, historians have transported us from prostitution in pre-urban medieval England to the rapidly industrialising metropolis of twentieth-century Shanghai, whilst the protagonists have

ranged from the practitioners of reform in Victorian Scotland to the prostitutes themselves of colonial Nairobi (see Karras 1996; Hershatter 1997; Mahood 1990; White 1990). Whilst once scholars of prostitution were seduced by the “sensational and salacious,” today it is far more common for historians to challenge the vernacular of marginality, deviancy and criminality (Gilfoyle 1999: 117). In doing so, histories of prostitution tend to engage with a broad remit of historical narratives and touch upon a host of historical sub-disciplines, from the economic to the political, from labour history to the history of sexuality, gender history to crime and deviancy, social and cultural history to imperial history, and from medical to urban history.

In part, the securing and sustaining of prostitution as a serious academic subject has been contingent upon advancements made in the field of social history since the 1950s, the advent of gender studies in the 1960s, and more recently the history of sexuality and crime history (see, for example, Cocks and Houlbrook 2006: 1-18). At a more specific level, its historicisation has been the political pursuit of social historians, and in particular that of feminist scholars, to study “marginalised groups who had seemingly been ‘hidden from history’” (ibid: 5). As Cocks and Houlbrook have argued, “feminism played a key role in this process of recovery, and helped to place sexuality at the centre of new historical narratives” (ibid: 5). Taken in this light, it is easy to see how prostitution found itself to be an ideal candidate for this historical exercise; it is marginal, feminine and sexual. Whilst the subject of prostitution still occupies a close association to the fields of feminist history and social history, the historiographical terrain nowadays tends to be more nuanced, and as we shall see, has been particularly influenced by developments in the fields of cultural and post-modernist history. Perhaps an apt indication of just how much ground has been made in recent years can be seen in the fact that, as Gilfoyle has noted, “even that old cliché – ‘prostitution is the oldest profession in the world,’” is now beginning to be challenged (Gilfoyle 1999: 119).

However, it would be misleading to imply that the evolution of the historiography has been either comprehensive or without criticism. Indeed, this review endeavours to demonstrate how in spite of all the advancements made within this field, the historicisation of prostitution in the context

of modern-Britain remains plagued by a number of lacunas in knowledge. The favouring of certain localities, actors, mechanisms of control, and epochs, as well as theoretical and methodological stances have all contributed to the fashioning of a historiography where many elements of prostitution continue “to have escaped history” (Corbin 1990: xvi). The structure of this chapter is thus formed in light of the desire to chronicle the evolution of prostitution within the historical record – acknowledging triumphs and pitfalls alike – with the overarching anticipation that my research positions itself as not only an affixation to the existing literature, but as a potential initiation to the filling of these gaps in knowledge.

### **(1:3) The British historiography: a preoccupation with the nineteenth century**

The historiography of prostitution in Britain has been characterised by an overwhelming and continued focus upon the mid-to late nineteenth century. Whilst the Victorian period has governed the chronological limelight, the city has proved to play the key backdrop to prostitution. Such scholarly focus reinforces and feeds off popular images of the late-Victorian metropolis as a space in which the paradoxical relationship between opportunity and danger, between modernity and moral decay, between novel modes of consumerism and concentrated poverty played out. The literature of post-Dickensian novelists, resilient music-hall songs, and, the legacy of Jack the Ripper, have all contributed to the fashioning of a modern Victorian imagination, in which the prostitute has been reproduced as what Walkowitz calls the “quintessential female figure of the urban scene” (Walkowitz 1992: 21). Aside from these discursive representations associated with the mid-to late nineteenth century city, historians of prostitution have been enticed by what may be deemed more material features of this period. Cultures, spaces, agents and consumers of prostitution in nineteenth century Britain were all significantly moulded by changing national conditions, which largely emulated broader Western economic and social transformations. Industrialisation and urbanisation prompted mass migration to Britain’s urban centres, creating an unprecedented body of male “middle and mobile working classes” who increasingly “delayed marriage” (Gilfoyle 1999: 135). Likewise, independent, single young women were migrating to the towns and cities with hopes of securing steady and financially rewarding employment. For some women for whom such anticipations were not realised, away from their familiar networks of



emotional and economic support and/or authority, prostitution represented “a viable economic alternative to poverty” (ibid: 135). Industrialisation thus facilitated the potential for a larger and more concentrated prostitute population and client base than previously experienced in Britain. If this period witnessed the birth of a modern culture of prostitution organisation in Britain, then so too did it witness a new landscape of prostitution supervision, in which the methods, spaces, and practitioners of control were formed in the image of the urban. As Englander has argued, “industrialisation disturbed and disrupted the social fabric”, therefore “it called forth new forms of industrial discipline and new forms of social control” (Englander 1998: 58). The reformatories, asylums, penitentiaries, lock hospitals, police forces and courts which formed the key components of this enhanced network of prostitution control in the latter half of the nineteenth century, have, as Henderson notes, left “valuable documentary evidence” (Henderson 1997: 232). Viewed alongside the wider body of source material bequeathed by the thriving areas of social investigation, eugenics, social purity, organised feminism, and sexology, Henderson’s argument that the preoccupation with the nineteenth century may in part be the “pragmatic” response of historians to this “relative superabundance” of evidence seems pretty sound (ibid: 233). Indeed, such logic would explain why above all other episodes or systems of prostitution control, the Contagious Diseases Acts (C.D. Acts) of 1864, 1866 and 1869 have incessantly dominated the British literature.

#### **(1:4) The Contagious Diseases Acts (C.D. Acts) 1864, 1866 and 1869**

The year 1980 marked a decisive moment in the founding of a British historiography of prostitution with the coinciding of two seminal publications. Walkowitz’s *Prostitution and Victorian Society*, and McHugh’s *Prostitution and Victorian Social Reform*, both consider the implementation of, and subsequent repeal campaigns surrounding the salacious C.D. Acts (Walkowitz 1980; McHugh 1980). The C.D. Acts constituted a series of statutory enactments surfacing from the mid-Victorian preoccupation with sanitary reform and social hygiene, intended to curtail the “spread of venereal disease among enlisted men in garrison towns and ports” (Walkowitz 1980: 1). The measures used to check this “spread of venereal disease” and protect the nation’s military strength, relied on the invasive medical inspection of women suspected of engaging in prostitution, whilst her male client

remained legally irreproachable. If found to be infected, women were removed from society and interned for up to nine months in a lock hospital, leaving her male clients/partners not only free from incarceration but also ironically free from compulsory treatment if infected (see, for example, Walkowitz and Walkowitz 1973: 73-106). It was this blatant and futile preservation of a “double standard of sexual morality” within the C.D. Acts, which mobilised support for and formed the basis of the campaigns for repeal which successfully culminated in their retraction in 1886 (Walkowitz 1980: 125).

Although thematically speaking, similar articles had appeared throughout the 1970s – including Walkowitz’s 1973 article with Daniel Walkowitz on the C.D. Acts in Southampton and Plymouth – McHugh’s and Walkowitz’s monographs made a key conceptual departure from what had gone before (see, for example, Hamilton 1978: 14-57; Smith 1971: 118-135). For the first time the C.D. Acts – and indeed prostitution more generally – were examined beyond rigid notions of the marginal. Instead, Walkowitz argued that the C.D. Acts proved to be indicative to the social and sexual lexicon of the mid-to late nineteenth century, in which these seemingly tangential expressions of sexual control were perceived to be so controversial that politicians and independent pressure groups alike were prepared to be “mobilised over sex” (Walkowitz 1980: 5). Similarly, McHugh uses the trajectory of legislative enactment and repeal to explore not so much how they affected ideas of sexuality and gender but how sexual law was able to impact “upon the party-political system” of Victorian England (Harrison 1982: 564). Seen in this way, the conceptual framework each study employs can be viewed as pre-empting Stallybrass and White’s theory of “that which is socially peripheral is frequently symbolically central” (Stallybrass and White 1986: 278).

Together, these publications not only set in motion the historiography of modern British prostitution, but moreover they secured prostitution’s position within the historical record as a subject whose significance was seen to touch upon the very social, cultural and political ideologies of societies, rather than simply charting a subordinate femininity and sexual deviancy within them. In particular, thirty years after its publication, Walkowitz’s *Prostitution and Victorian Society*,

remains thematically relevant and is commonly used as the starting point for historians approaching British prostitution. Moving between the construction of legislation at the national level, to its implementation at the local level – in this instance through case studies of the port cities of Southampton and Plymouth – and finally, to its impact at the individual level of the prostitute, Walkowitz explores ideas of victimisation and resistance, patriarchy and feminism, state interventionism and voluntary pressure groups, inter-class tensions and alliances, and the relationship between the societal body and the body of the self. These are all concepts which remain central and relevant to histories of prostitution.

However, the attention Walkowitz, McHugh, and subsequent scholars have afforded the C.D. Acts has also tended to advance a rather skewed understanding of the history of prostitution in Britain. Firstly, it is imperative that we understand that the geographical impact of these Acts was fairly modest, only being enacted in a “limited number of garrison towns” (Henderson 1997: 232). By Walkowitz’s and Walkowitz’s own admissions, it was only garrison towns in “Ireland and Southern England” where prostitution law operated under this system, so to deem these Acts as a national measure is in itself a slightly inflated claim (Walkowitz and Walkowitz 1973: 74). The 1864 Act was endorsed in eleven military and naval towns as follows: Plymouth, Portsmouth, Woolwich, Chatham, Sheerness, Aldershot, Chichester, Shorncliffe, the Curragh, Cork, and Queenstown (ibid: 101). Windsor was subsequently added to the list within the Act of 1866, followed by the extension to five additional areas in 1868/1869, including Southampton (ibid: 102). As Susan Lemar has noted in her study of the control of venereal disease in 1920s Edinburgh, the “foregoing literature has concentrated on peaks of legislative activity”, such as the C.D. Acts (Lemar 2006: 74). The point is that the C.D. Acts were just a particular instance of a dozen or more national and localised legislative measures associated with prostitution enacted and utilised throughout the nineteenth century. Their controversial nature should not be confused for securing their significance. More importantly, the regulative methods employed within the C.D. Acts were far from typical of regulatory models and approaches deployed more commonly throughout the period.

As Laite has recently argued, the scholarly preoccupation with the C.D. Acts has meant that “the solicitation laws are seriously under-examined”, even though their geographical coverage and longevity renders them a far more eminent feature of nineteenth century prostitution control (Laite 2008b: 99). The language of the C.D. Acts was framed in the medical not the legal. Its enforcers were typically doctors rather than police officers. Indeed, Walkowitz argues that the medical inspection of the prostitute in Plymouth and Southampton, whereby the “female body” was “identified as the primary source of disease and pollution”, led to the creation of a feminine “outcast group” (Walkowitz 1980: 5). Here, the C.D. Acts were seen to alter what could be an ephemeral encounter within the working life cycle of a prostitute into a permanent stigma of sexual depravity, which pushed her to the margins of both her community and society. Yet, the solicitation laws which predated this example of control had already worked to castigate the prostitute through the powerful legislative definition of such women as ‘common prostitutes’ and the decision by courts to fine and frequently remove her from society by incarcerating her in prison and/or in a semi-penal institution. It is tempting to suppose that the C.D. Acts constructed new understandings and categories of feminine sexual deviance, but as Matt Cook has warned “we should not be seduced by the idea of a sudden rupture in ideas and cultures of sexuality” culminating from legislative enactments (Cook 2005: 65). However, as Laite suggests, the historical focus upon these Acts has meant that, within the literature at least, a British prostitute identity has been “developed and assigned by medical discourse and medical registration”, in spite of the fact that typically prostitutes would have been governed by “a legal, not medical, process of classification” under the solicitation laws (Laite 2008: 99).

Viewed in this way, it is easy to see how Britain’s experience of prostitution control has been inappropriately likened to continental European systems of regulation. For example, Corbin notes how after 1900, the beliefs and tactics of the French neo-regulationists encapsulated shifting conceptualisations concerning prostitution’s perceived impact upon the individual body and the societal body. What had previously been guided by notions of safeguarding the sexual morality of the individual had been replaced by eugenicist based fears over venereal disease, racial purity, and public hygiene. As such, Corbin traces how in early-twentieth century France the currency of

hygiene was legitimised to the point where “doctors thus replaced police officers in the surveillance of prostitutes”: a substitution of power witnessed decades earlier in a select few British garrison and port towns (Gilfoyle 1999: 122). In his theoretical analysis of prostitution through the binary concepts of the state and power, Werth has also contended that “in much of Europe, then, the nineteenth century saw the equation of public health with public order” (Werth 1994:10). The problem is that the idea of a shared Anglo-French – or ubiquitous European - system of control only holds substance in relation to the C.D. Acts. Moreover, this thesis argues that it is both restrictive and misleading to talk about unified or fixed regulatory systems which fell neatly under the categories of ‘neo-reglationist’ or ‘abolitionist’ or followed a route of either ‘medicalisation’ or ‘criminalisation’. This, I contend, is connected to the fact that the locus of power never resided fully with or emanated entirely from the level of the state, and thus we must pay attention to the pluralistic nuances of power and control – and the interactions between them – at the state, local, organisational and individual levels. In this sense, as the course of this investigation reveals, it is often difficult to talk about particular localities operating under a single regulatory category let alone whole nations and continents. Ultimately, it is more fitting to talk about the trajectory of British regulatory control being formed by a series of heterogeneous systems with a homogenous goal; control. Over time, from area to area, and between bodies, as we have seen – and will continue to see - the language of regulation constantly changed, but the principal objective *to regulate* remained a constant.

### **(1:5) Reform and prevention: the historiography of the ‘semi-penal’ sphere**

In recent years, historians of nineteenth century prostitution have begun to move the focus away from the medical and legislative regulation of the prostitute under the C.D. Acts, and towards the sphere of reform and prevention. This shift of attention from formal mechanisms of control to what Weiner has termed as the “semi-penal” system of non-custodial institutions, has sought to demonstrate how regulatory measures concerned with ‘moralising’ the prostitute could be just as powerful – and punitive - as the written law concerned with ‘criminalising’ her (Weiner 1990: 130). Institutions of reform most commonly referred to as reformatories, penitentiaries, refuges,

rescue homes, and Magdalenes, were part of a wider nineteenth century interest in philanthropic and social work, and in particular were the manifestation of the Victorian middle-class anxiety regarding the ‘association’ between urban poverty and immorality (see, for example, Wilson 1991). However, to view such spaces as a temperate alternative to the prison or the workhouse where the prostitute encountered sanctuary rather than punishment, underestimates the complex intersection of principles which formed the foundation of these institutions. In varying degrees and combinations, reformatory and preventative bodies incorporated and disseminated religious values – commonly evangelical zeal – the imposition of middle-class morals upon its working-class subjects, eugenics, social hygiene and purity, and the reassignment of traditional gender roles, alongside the more tangible provisions of shelter, food, and wages. As Humphries has noted in his history of sex in Britain, the “reformatory purpose was modelled on early prisons, and it sometimes led to even greater severity” (Humphries 1998: 87).

Of particular significance, has been the work of Mahood, Littlewood and Bartley, whilst Barton’s research on the semi-penal regulation of femininity in Liverpool across 200 years has a specific importance to my study and will be periodically considered over the course of this thesis. Mahood’s 1990 publication, *The Magdalenes: Prostitution in the Nineteenth Century* looks at regulation in the context of Scotland. Her focus is rather more expansive than that which her title alone suggests, drawing on Foucauldian theory to examine how shifting discourses of prostitution within the fields of medicine, philanthropy, policing and reform impacted materially upon the ways in which the prostitute was understood and regulated. In Scotland – where the C.D. Acts were not in operation – Mahood argues that the focus was on cleansing the mind of the prostitute through reformatory measures as oppose to the medical cleansing of the prostitute through invasive inspections and internment. Mahood’s research departs from earlier publications on the reformatory system (which were largely celebratory in nature and uncritical in style) in two main ways. Firstly, in her collaborative research article with Littlewood, she contends that the reformatory model was directed by a dual desire to “remake ideal proletarian and gendered subjects” (Littlewood and Mahood 1991: 169). The Glasgow Magdalene Institution, with its ability to confine, monitor and control the prostitute on a daily-basis (for a period of normally up to two years), sought to make

disciplined and skilled workers through domestic labour regimes, as well as sexually pure and controlled women who embodied an ‘appropriate’ form of femininity alike to that of their middle-class regulators. Secondly, in *The Magdalenes* she demonstrates how in the context of Glasgow an explicit degree of inter-agency alliance existed between the Magdalene, the municipal court system and the local police, to create an apparatus where the Institution operated not subordinately of the law but as a legislatively recognised space. Referred to by Mahood as the ‘Glasgow System’, it derived from the 1866 Glasgow Police Act, which gave the police and magistrates the power to “force targeted women either to find ‘respectable’ employment, to leave the city or to enter the Magdalene” (Werth 1994: 7). Thus, in the second half of nineteenth century Glasgow not only was the ‘voluntary’ nature of admissions to the Institution seriously undermined, but the process of moral reform came to be infiltrated into legislative discourse.

In many ways Bartley’s *Prostitution: Prevention and Reform in England, 1860-1914*, offers the most comprehensive assessment to-date of the evolution of prostitution control outside the legislative penal system, whilst her focus on England counteracts the tendency of previous scholars to favour the Irish and Scottish experience. For Bartley, reform in the nineteenth century developed along a trajectory fraught with difficulties and inherent limitations linked to its contact with the prostitute only *after* the point of legal curtailment or altruistic intervention. Thus, its ultimate aim of eradicating, or at least significantly reducing the scale of prostitution by targeting ‘fallen women’, was an unrealistic and incalculable pursuit. It was the “the failure of these reform initiatives”, Bartley argues, which prompted for the emergence of the preventive movement (Bartley 2000: 2). Prevention was based on the premise that if reform could not stop prostitutes from reengaging with prostitution after their release, then the interception of vulnerable young women before their anticipated deviancy had even taken place could avert them from a future life of prostitution. Focussing on the Ladies’ Associations for the Care of Friendless Girls, Bartley shows how preventive homes such as Summer Hill Training Schools for Girls in Birmingham, closely emulated the day-to-day routines, rehabilitative and educative programmes and religious outlooks of their reformatory counterparts (although these inmates were not subjected to laundry work). In this sense, the shift towards prevention enabled the semi-penal sphere to extend its net of

control to encompass the actual as well as potential female offender. The establishment of preventive homes in the late nineteenth century, Bartley shows, was also contingent upon growing Victorian associations between ‘feeble-mindedness’ and prostitution, and this she argues is why prostitution “must be placed within the context of changes in mental health provision, attitudes towards female madness, and the development of eugenics as much as in charitable endeavour” (ibid. 15). This notion that readings of ‘underworld’ cultures or subordinate behaviours should not be dislocated from hegemonic events and trends is something which continually informs the analysis of my investigation. Bartley concludes her study by charting the path to decline which had manifested itself in the dwindling numbers of women passing through reformatory and preventive institutions by the late Victorian period, and the complete change of tack some institutions undertook becoming “homes for single mothers” (ibid: 64). When it became evident that the sphere of semi-penal reformatory and preventive control was failing to curtail the ‘prostitute problem’, Bartley shows how attention shifted once again as organisations such as the National Vigilance Association spearheaded a new regulatory movement which focussed upon improving morality – particularly sexual morality – within the public world. Their aim was simple; “to create a moral climate in which prostitution would inevitably disappear” (ibid: 15). Thus, prevention continued to remain at the crux of control but crucially the scope of prevention was extended to target social morality more broadly, although Bartley’s investigation terminates before offering an examination of this new regulatory approach. Although Bartley does not observe the trend herself, her research demonstrates how over the course of the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth century the sphere of semi-penal or ‘unofficial’ prostitution control had shifted from targeting prostitutes themselves, to potential prostitutes to the society these women inhabited, and thus the spaces of control altered accordingly from the reformatory home to the preventive home to the public domain. In chapter six, I look at how the unofficial landscape of prostitution control in interwar Liverpool encapsulated this new dynamic of preventive control within the public rather than penal sphere whilst arguing that echoes of the reformatory could still be traced.

In recent years, historians of nineteenth century prostitution have begun to readdress the balance by exploring how systems concerned not only with legislative regulation but also



prevention and reform existed beyond the geographical areas under the C.D. Acts. In doing so they have demonstrated how reformatory measures constructed outside the realms of legislation formed just as an important and powerful component of the landscape of control as the regulatory forces which were actually executing the law. Yet, whilst their potential cannot be denied, it is crucial that we appreciate them as a constituent within an extensive and complex network of regulatory measures, and one at that which can only allude to the prostitute once her trade has been curtailed and her character quashed. In essence, such studies are limited by their inevitable inability to reconstruct a history of prostitution and the prostitute before the point of curtailment. Moreover, Bartley uses the advent of the First World War as suitable place to terminate her study in spite of highlighting herself that this by no means marked the end of the quasi-official control of prostitution, whilst Mahood departs from her investigation at the close of the nineteenth century. Once again, prostitution in the twentieth century proves itself to be historiographically allusive.

#### **(1:6) Moving beyond the nineteenth century: prostitution in early twentieth century Britain**

If ever it was necessary to demonstrate the extent to which historians have ignored prostitution in twentieth century Britain, perhaps no other example possesses greater poignancy than that of Nash's 1994 publication, *Prostitution in Great Britain 1485-1901: An Annotated Bibliography*. It remains to date the only bibliographical manuscript on British prostitution, with a vast chronology stretching over four hundred years. Whilst of course it is fair to reason that a thematic bibliography must begin and end at some point, the assumption must be that Nash's termination from this volume at 1901 denotes a practical response to an absence in literature beyond this point. It is worth noting, however, that this rather bleak situation concerning the historiography of twentieth century prostitution is fairly unexceptional. Indeed, as King has noted, "the history of crime in England is well served by two textbooks in the Longman Themes in British Social History series" (King 1999: 163). Firstly, Sharpe's 1984 publication covered *Crime in Early Modern England, 1550-1750*. This was followed in 1987 by Emsley's *Crime and Society in England, 1750-1900*. Once again, despite a collective coverage spanning over three hundred years, the close of the nineteenth century appears to mark an analytical precipice. As King comments, "sadly the parallel volume Longman has promised for so long on the twentieth century has yet to appear" (King 1999:

133). Concern surrounding this absence has more recently been voiced by the Feminist Crime Research Network, noting how “very little detailed empirical research has been conducted on the early twentieth century and, indeed, on the inter-war period, which saw the emergence of modern ‘professions’ such as probation and social work” (D’Cruze, Jackson and Rowbotham 2005: 139). This void is thus not only one of historical subject but also academic field.

Over the past decade or so, Britain’s interwar period has enjoyed increasing attention from historians of gender and sexuality, with the corollary that prostitution between the wars has featured – albeit as a subsidiary element – within studies of childhood and adolescence, female deviancy, working-class cultures, leisure, entertainment and consumerism, venereal disease, miscegenation, homosexuality and imperial power. So, for example, Bland has examined how set against the backdrop of imperial and economic decline sexual deviancy frequently assumed a powerful association to racial otherness and national difference, an association which was vividly played out within interwar discourses of miscegenation (Bland 2005: 29-61). In this climate, as Bland’s research has illustrated, the prostitute woman could be constructed as both an “atavistic” and dangerous individual who sought out sexual interactions with foreign men, and as a “passive” and vulnerable white woman who had been ensnared by the predatory foreign male widely regarded as a “sexual beast” (ibid: 36). Houlbrook’s research on the Brigade of Guards in the first half of the twentieth century has also explored the tropes of sexuality, gender and nationhood through a case-study of male prostitution within the military (Houlbrook 2003: 351-388). Unlike in Bland’s study, the ‘threat’ identified in Houlbrook’s investigation came not only from a domestic figure but one whom was popularly conceptualised as an emblem of national heroism and Britishness. By examining the paradox of the “soldier hero” as “a rent boy,” Houlbrook demonstrates how the body of the individual was able to be constructed as a contentious site which was seen to undermine hegemonic notions of nationhood and masculinity and destabilise “the cultural politics of sexuality” (ibid: 388). In his oral history of the British experience of pre-marital sex in the first half of the twentieth century, Steven Humphries provides a rich insight into the personal experiences and perceptions of sex and sexuality amongst working-class youths. Of particular significance is his discussion regarding the expanding parameters and changing

dynamics of feminine sexual immorality at this time, whereby “some investigators and writers clearly found it almost unimaginable that a woman would consent to casual sex unless she was a prostitute” (Humphries 1988: 29). It was in this context that the amateur prostitute or woman – who “openly defied sexual convention and were happy to agree to casual sex, preferably in return for some gift or favour” - was constructed as a “major social problem,” and who’s increasing presence was understood to have resulted in “the decline in professional prostitution during the 1920s” (ibid: 87). In *Gender, Justice and Welfare* Cox has considered the processes through which the ‘delinquent’ girl in the first half of the twentieth century was constructed as a particularly problematic figure, in spite of the fact that statistically girls committed far fewer crimes than boys. (Cox 2003). Tracing state responses, voluntary initiatives and societal understandings, Cox argues that a dominant discourse emerged from these spheres which positioned female juvenile delinquency as inextricably linked to sexual immorality. The sexualisation of these young ‘wayward’ girls, legitimised and prioritised their ‘need’ of reform and regulation, and justified the involvement of the various channels – from the law to voluntary organisations – seeking to do just that. Cox associates this increasing obsession as an extension of the growing importance placed upon the “emerging welfare state, the criminal justice system and the voluntary sector” (ibid: 6-7). For Cox, this process of sexualising deviancy was not based upon an “essentialised view of girls and girlhood in general”, but rather assumed a more selective dynamic whereby girls from economically deprived backgrounds were especially targeted so that deviancy, sexual immorality and poverty became an intrinsic and powerful problem (ibid: 4). A key paradox illuminated by Cox – and one which is considered over the course of my research - is that regarding how why in spite of the contemporary associations made between poverty and feminine deviance – such as juvenile prostitution – were narratives and regulatory responses to the wayward girl framed by the desire to sexually purify her rather than address the structural problems of poverty?

Perhaps it is hardly surprising given that the historiography of prostitution in interwar Britain is still very much in its infancy that the role of officially attested female police officers and unattested women patrols remains an uncharted dimension of prostitution control. Similarly, the early literature has yet to extend its thematic gaze across the spectrum of prostitution ‘shades’ to

encompass amateur prostitution. Subsequently, there exists a pronounced lack of historical specificity to the interwar historiography, with the continued focus upon both the professional street-walker and regulatory bodies with antecedents in the nineteenth century meaning that there is little distinction across the centurial divide. Of course, this is not to overlook the vibrant scholarly research which exists in relation to the formation of women police and patrols during the First World War by historians such as Levine, Bland and Woollacott, nor Jackson's seminal publication on the broader evolution of women policing over the course of the twentieth century (see Levine 1994: 34-78; Bland 1985: 23-49; Woollacott 1994: 325-347; Jackson 2006). This burgeoning literature of policing, and more specifically women policing, has begun to throw light on early twentieth century prostitution as a unique period for both regulator and regulated, police and policed. The works of Levine, Woollacott, Bland and Jackson, for example, have all highlighted the dynamic spectrum of prostitution regulation in the context of the Great War by focussing upon how the establishment of female patrols at this juncture came to put women in the front-line of prostitution control for the first time. In charting this distinctly twentieth century mechanism of regulation, the literature has tended to move beyond rudimentary readings of patriarchal control to offer a more nuanced understanding of women - as Jackson purports - not only as "victims and offenders" but also as "women in control" (Jackson 2006: 4). Similarly, these works have considered the expanding parameters of sexual feminine deviancy at this time by examining how this new form of feminine controller emerged in response to recurrent wartime anxieties surrounding the sexual behaviour of young women and girls, encapsulated nowhere more vividly than in the figure of the amateur prostitute. Yet, crucially, with the exception of Jackson's research, our knowledge of these new dimensions of early twentieth century prostitution are largely confined to the war itself. Hitherto, no exclusive or extensive peacetime study of women police patrols or amateur prostitution have emerged from the literature. However, as this investigation goes on to illustrate, the Armistice by no means marked the end of either the amateur prostitute or the women patrols in the context of Liverpool. Expanding the chronological coverage allows my investigation to consider an uncharted dimension of prostitution control with the anticipation that a more dynamic approach to the gendering of sexual regulation can be explored and appreciated.

### The interwar historiography

In spite of the above works which have touched upon early twentieth century and/or interwar prostitution in various ways and to varying degrees, it was only in 2007 that the first specific and sustained inquiries into interwar prostitution emerged. Whilst the literature is undeniably still very much in its infancy, the research of two scholars has begun to turn the historiographical tide.

Slater's research focuses upon the regulation of prostitution by the Metropolitan Police Force, largely between the years 1918 and 1939, although more recently extending the chronological gaze into the 1950s (see Slater 2007a; *ibid* 2007b: 53-74; *ibid* 2010: 332-357). Taking Soho as the geographical nucleus of his studies, Slater consults police records, social commentaries, memoirs and newspaper articles, in order to demonstrate how within this locality prostitution was literally and metaphorically associated with foreignness. In many ways, Slater's work draws upon and reflects the methodological and theoretical expansions which have emerged from the field of cultural history in recent years – in particular its interest in investigating the construction of representations and meanings – as well as its associations with the linguistic and postmodernist technique of discourse analysis (see, for example, Walkowitz 1992). In such a way, the scope of sources employed, and the skills used to engage with his material, allow for Slater to negotiate and reconstruct the notoriously troublesome relationship between how prostitution was regulated, how it was represented, and how it was perceived. Indeed, Slater argues that “the perceived linkage of prostitution and foreignness influenced policing practices” (Slater 2007b: 67). The precise geographical focus of his investigation, enables Slater to construct a sophisticated analysis of the symbiotic relationship between economic instability, fears over imperial decline, anxieties surrounding the social status of women, and the treatment of prostitution.

Of particular importance is Slater's aptitude at drawing upon recent advances made in the broader literature regarding the geography of sexuality and crime, to demonstrate how prostitution warranted different levels of anxiety and police intervention in different localities within the metropolis. Traditionally scholars have tended to privilege the historicity of time over space. Increasingly, histories of crime and sexuality are beginning to conceptualise ‘space’ as an active

component within the formation of sexual and criminal activities rather than simply understanding it as the backdrop to them. This shift can be traced, for example, in Houlbrook's work on early twentieth century homosexuality and in his broader reflections upon what he terms the "urban histories of sexuality" (Houlbrook 2006: 136). He argues that, "modern urban culture has shaped the experience, organisation and understanding of sexual behaviour in such a way as to constitute a unique sexual space" (ibid: 136). For Houlbrook, a male homosexual culture was forged in early twentieth century London in response to the sites afforded by the city, i.e. the use of public toilets and parks as a space in which gay men could explore their sexuality. Howell has examined how a 'spatial order' was constructed in response to the regulation of prostitution in nineteenth century Cambridge (Howell 2000: 376-402). Howell demonstrates how regulatory responses to prostitution in the context of Victorian Cambridge were contingent upon the broader premium society placed upon the dichotomy of public and private. At once, this distinction both constructed prostitution as a 'public problem', propagated a spatial hierarchy whereby the deviancy of a prostitute was dependent upon where exactly she transgressed, and informed where regulatory measures were to be imposed. Together, these ideas coalesced to shape a particular sexual geography of prostitution; "if there was a 'fit' between prostitutional activity and prostitutional policy, this was largely because the latter dictated the nature of such activity" (ibid: 396). However, Slater's discussion of the sexual geography of prostitution in interwar London relies heavily upon published accounts of the disparate regulatory responses. Thus, whilst my research closely replicates the approach of Slater with regards to the spatial policing of prostitution, it seeks to offer a fuller and more precise understanding of the sexual geography of prostitution in Liverpool by using the information detailed within the police court registers to plot a series of maps to illuminate prostitute, or at least, police activity.

Yet, it is also paradoxically the choice of locality which limits how far we should read Slater's work as indicative to the national, and/or provincial, experiences of the control and conceptualisation of prostitution in the interwar period. Slater contends that "London served as a microcosm of the anxieties regarding the post First World War status of women" (Slater 2007b: 67). In making such a claim, Slater essentially fails to recognise that Soho possesses its own social,

cultural and economic identity; its customs and codes setting it apart as a unique area which bears little resemblance to London as a whole let alone acting as a ‘microcosm’ for the national context. In particular, his 2007 article tends to focus more upon the pimp rather than the prostitute, and therefore subsequently restricts his ability to look at prostitution beyond the level of organised crime – a system of control likely to have gone unnoticed by the vast majority of prostitutes outside of Soho and outside London (Slater 2007b). Nevertheless, Slater’s body of literature does succeed in both incorporating and signifying the more complex approach students of prostitution are increasingly taking by entwining larger macro narratives concerning economics, labour markets and national identity into micro-studies of feminine sexual deviance in a definite place and time.

Laite’s thesis, ‘Prostitution in London, 1885–1930,’ represents another important measure of how historians are beginning to move beyond the precipice of the First World War. Combined with her numerous journal publications detailing the evolution of prostitution legislation since the Victorian period, the Association for Moral and Social Hygiene’s (AMSH) campaigns for legislative review in the interwar years, and the establishment of the fingerprinting system by the Metropolitan Police, she has contributed vastly to the turning of the historiographical tide (see Laite 2007; *ibid* 2008a: 207-233; *ibid* 2008b: 96-116; *ibid* 2006: 17-18). Her 2008 published article considers how the AMSH campaigned for the “repeal of the solicitation laws” and the decriminalisation of prostitution-related offences between 1915 and 1959, arguing that British abolitionism did not come to an end with the repealing of the C.D. Acts (*ibid* 2008a: 209). Although Latie’s research not only extends the historiography of modern British prostitution but draws valuable continuums across the nineteenth and twentieth centurial divide, it is clear that her work has also inherited certain conceptual limitations from nineteenth century based studies. Alike to Walkowitz’s and McHugh’s investigations, Laite’s research is not so much about prostitution experiences, practices or even its regulation, but about how a particular social organisation reacted at certain moments during the first half of the twentieth century to the solicitation laws. For example, what we can glean from her 2008 article is confined to the beliefs and actions of the AMSH, restricting any possibility of a “prostitute-centred history” (Henderson 1997: 239).

Furthermore, Laite's failure to consider how the prostitute herself actually understood or negotiated the laws seeking to regulate her is somewhat at odds with her feminist based anticipations. She is keen to show how the AMSH's grievance with the inherent sexual double standard of the solicitation laws demonstrated that feminism did not necessarily go into "serious and irrecoverable decline by the end of the First World War" (Laite 2008a: 209). The point is that Laite has focussed too narrowly on the route of feminism at an organised and institutional level and thus failed to reconstruct how exactly this sexual double standard impacted upon prostitutes in the everyday context. Discerning the law as a cohesive patriarchal system seeking to repress women and excuse men is an important interwar contention, but an exclusive focus upon it not only contradicts and conflicts with feminist epistemology by uncritically reducing the prostitute to victim status, it also overlooks the fact that increasingly in the early twentieth century it was the perceived agency of prostitutes that was seen to be so dangerous. As Odem has argued in her study of how sexological theorising impacted upon understandings of feminine sexual immorality in early twentieth century America, "narratives of passivity gave way to constructions of wilful misbehaviour and personal pathology" (Odem 1995: 480). The upshot of this upon Laite's study has been that she fails to consider how broader political and cultural powers were altering at this time to impact upon the way in which prostitution was conceptualised and regulated. For example, she overlooks the point that the state was taking an increasingly interventionist approach to the regulating of individual sexuality at this moment, and thus at times her research appears dislocated from the cultural backdrop which is so intrinsic to the representation, regulation and experience of prostitution .

### **(1:7) Contextualising my research**

In light of the emerging literature detailed above, and the various imbalances which have been observed, I will now contextualise and explain the rationale behind the basis of my research in terms of its chronological, geographical and thematic approach. Firstly, it seeks to readdress the historiographical balance by focussing attention on the period between the wars. Whilst prostitution remained a massive social, moral and political issue in the 1920s and 1930s, the period has traditionally been neglected by scholars. As Godfrey has contended, "the First World War has always provided something of a full-stop for historians of the nineteenth century" (Godfrey 2011:



160). Scholars of British prostitution have certainly prescribed to this chronological cessation, although the historiographical tide is beginning to turn. Yet, as Jackson has said:

“while a number of studies have examined legislative changes, an in- depth study of the practice and policing of prostitution in the twentieth century is needed. Rather more is known about the sexual economy of Metropolitan London than about the UK’s other towns and cities because it tended to feature in social surveys and parliamentary enquiries” (Jackson 2006: 174).

Together, Slater and Laite have begun to readdress the first lacuna in knowledge observed by Jackson, although geographically they have refocused attention on London rather than divert it. Indeed, in his most recent journal publication from 2010, Slater has noted how his research of prostitution in interwar London would, “merit comparison with venal sexual conduct in other urban metropolises in the United Kingdom, such as Belfast, Cardiff, Edinburgh, and Liverpool” (Slater 2010: 355).

Therefore, the second aim of this investigation is to extend the geographical coverage beyond the gaze of London. Liverpool, I contend, offers an interesting provincial case study for a number of reasons. As previously indicated, Victorian Liverpool was conceptualised as a city plagued by prostitution, a centre of unbridled vice and immorality, a sanctuary from police intervention, and ultimately, a municipality which deserved its title as the “black spot on the Mersey” (Hume 1858). Although the validity of such claims are questionable, it is evident that the legacy of this period pervaded well into the twentieth century, and that the Liverpool of the interwar years was clearly a city working hard to distance and rebrand itself from its Victorian past. Ironically, at the very same time Liverpool was trying to cling on to its late nineteenth century status as ‘the second city of the Empire’ (see, for example, Lees 2011; Walton 1991). As the largest port outside of London, Liverpool was particularly devastated by the global economic downturn of the late 1920s and 1930s. In 1932, the worst year of the depression, roughly 28% of Liverpool’s population were out of work, a figure which stood at exactly double the national average for the period 1921-1939 (see,

MSRG 1992; sections 8:10-8:15). In a male-dominated and single industry economy – the shipping sector – Liverpool had traditionally been troubled by a precarious labour market, a problem which the depression served to aggravate. In the absence of the safeguard of significant alternative economic activity, the city found itself paying a high price, and in many ways it was this period which marked the start of the shift which unfolded over the course of the twentieth century of Liverpool from “commercial metropolis” to “unwanted mausoleum” and from “world city” to “pariah city” (MSRG 1992: 13; Wilks-Heeg 2003: 36). Thus, a key line of enquiry is to establish how exactly the economic climate impacted upon women’s involvement in the prostitution trade, in what ways it influenced individual’s motivations for engaging in it – given the lack of alternative options – and, to consider how it shaped both the way prostitution was practiced – for example, did it lead to a rise in part-time and casual prostitution – and the rates of supply and demand. Yet, more crucially, it seeks to make sense of why in the midst of the economic depression the criminal statistical returns for prostitution offences showed such a colossal decrease. Additionally, with its status as a vibrant and cosmopolitan sea-port, Liverpool became the focus for a number of key debates on race, miscegenation, immigration and nationality at this time. Indeed, the sexualisation of racial difference which was understood to have played a key part in the violence issued against members of Liverpool’s ethnic minority groups in the race riots of 1919, proved to have a bearing upon both the representation and regulation of prostitution across the research period. Set against localised concerns regarding an ‘influx’ of immigrants and its perceived impact upon the problem of economic dislocation and broader national insecurities prompted by declining imperial power, racial stereotypes which positioned prostitution as a trade both over-represented by foreign and/or ethnic women and patronised by sexually predatory foreign and/or ethnic men were able to pervade. This investigation, therefore, seeks to critically examine this process of the sexualisation of race, to test the validity and appropriateness of such associations, and to question what exactly the ‘racialization’ of prostitution can tell us about wider contemporary racial and racist narratives. And, finally, whilst Liverpool has been popularly and culturally conceptualised as a city synonymous with crime, surprisingly it has received very little attention from historians of crime. Thus, this project is interested in locating historical parallels, in tracing the origins of the city’s

unenviable associations with crime, and in doing so understanding how criminal identities and/or stereotypes are constructed in the first place.

Thirdly, this investigation seeks to offer a more nuanced picture of interwar prostitution than the literature has hitherto provided by paying attention to what the physician Acton talked about in his 1857 publication as “the shades of prostitution,” the divergent types of feminine sexual immorality which together formed the category of prostitution (Acton 1857: 60). Whilst in the historical context prostitutes were rarely viewed as a homogeneous group, subsequent scholars have largely failed to explore and/or listen to the nuances of prostitution and prostitute categories. In Mayhew’s 1861 edited publication, *London Labour and the London Poor* (volume 4), Hemyng encountered a seemingly endless catalogue of ‘prostitute-types’ as he traversed through London’s criminal underworld. From high-class ‘prima donnas’ who “live in a superior style,” to ‘park women’ who frequent the city’s parks after nightfall consenting “to any species of humiliation for the sake of acquiring a few shillings” (Hemyng 2005: 9 and 57). And, from low-paid ‘soldiers’ women’ whose perceived role in the spread of venereal disease (particularly syphilis) amongst military personnel earned them the name “paid murderesses”, to clandestine ‘amateurs’ or ‘Dollymops’ who periodically engaged in prostitution “to get money not to subsist upon, but to supply her with funds to meet the debts her extravagance caused her to contract,” and otherwise not afforded through the wages of her day-job as factory girl or domestic servant (ibid: 29 and 57). By the early twentieth century, social explorations continued to talk about the prostitute and her trade in accordance to the particular dissonances or ‘shades’ which their inquiries had illuminated. For example, the 1916 publication *Downward Paths: An Inquiry into the Causes Which Contribute to the Making of the Prostitute* (hereafter *DP*), placed a premium upon articulating such nuances with the anticipation that a more lateral reading of prostitution would ultimately lead to more “enlightened, sane, and scientific reforms” (Royden ed., 1916: xiii). So, they argued, how:

“The Underworld of a great city has as many ranks and classes as society in general. To take one class of prostitute as for example the inhabitants of one block of flats, the clients of one dressmaker, the *habituées* [sic] of one restaurants, would teach us no more of the conditions of

the whole body of prostitutes than a similar investigation of one residential street, the clients of one tailor, or the customers of one eating-house would teach us of the condition of the whole population. It is obvious that all these different types work under different conditions and for different rates of pay and have different antecedents” (ibid: 7-8).

As the evidence emerging from Liverpool is beginning to intimate, paying attention to the ‘shades of prostitution’ has a particular significance in this climate where prostitute practices and categories were understood to be branching out and altering. Indeed, in his study of interwar London, Slater is extremely proficient in delineating the divergent forms and spaces of prostitution which materialized as the process of professionalization and commercialisation took hold and created a gulf between the ‘new’ and ‘old’ types of professional prostitute and their regulatory treatment (see Slater 2007a). However, what remains absent from the historiography of interwar prostitution is any sustained examination of the amateur prostitute. Whilst, much has been written about the amateur in the context of the First World War, historians have failed – and often refused – to consider her within the context of peacetime. For example, Slater and Hall have both rejected the amateur within their studies, in part as a practical response to the availability – or rather unavailability – of source material, but principally because they recognise her to be a ‘mythical’ character constructed and utilised by contemporaries keen to articulate their broader concerns over feminine sexual morality, venereal disease, the changing boundaries of gender and new forms of leisure rather than speaking of “an actual phenomenon” (Slater 2007a: 21; Hall 1991: 51). Similarly, Laite has argued how this form of prostitution was “becoming less common” at this juncture, and resonated more within the “public imagination” than in “urban reality” (Laite 2008b: 112 and 103). In his study of prostitution in nineteenth and early twentieth century New York, Gilfoyle limited his use of the term prostitution to refer to instances “only when money was exchanged” (Gilfoyle 1992: 19). He argued that the custom of ‘treating’ by ‘charity girls’ – the American equivalent of the amateur – “was not the same as prostitution” and thus to discuss it would only serve to reproduce historical stereotypes whereby “any woman who engaged in premarital intercourse was labelled a prostitute” (ibid: 19). Whilst my investigation is careful to critically evaluate the accuracy and appropriateness of such categories as oppose to uncritically

replicating them, it nevertheless departs from the above standpoints in three main ways. Firstly, as Bland has argued in her discussion of the amateur, the real significance lay not in gauging how precise contemporaries were in their belief that young women were increasingly engaging in pre-marital sex, but rather in acknowledging that there was “widely *believed* to be such an increase” (Bland 1982: 380). Thus, it is imperative to listen to historical suppositions rather than silencing them simply because they do not sit comfortably with our modern-day classifications of feminine sexual behaviours, and in doing so we may learn as much about the condition and conditions of hegemonic society which made such distinctions between appropriate and inappropriate feminine sexualities as we do about the inappropriate sexualities themselves. Secondly, the findings of this study go on to illustrate that far from being confined to the realm of the imagined or the discursive, the amateur increasingly came to feature within legal and political discussions of prostitution, materially altered the landscape of official and unofficial prostitution regulation, had a profound bearing upon male demand for the professional’s services and challenged understandings of prostitution as a commercial act. Thirdly, this investigation argues that it is only when the analytical gaze is broad enough to examine the different ‘shades’ of prostitution that we can begin to make sense of why the declining criminal statistical returns for prostitution offences in both the local and national context neither succeeded in fully supplanting anxieties or accorded with the route interwar prostitution – its representation, regulation and experiences - actually unfolded along. As Hall noted in 1932, “it seems abundantly evident that to moot to include in a study of present-day prostitution, the non-commercial form of promiscuous sex relationships, would be to falsify all conclusions which might be drawn”(Hall 1932: 21).

Crucially, however, this thesis is not just about contributing to the evening out of a skewed historiography, nor about ‘filling in the gaps’ to remedy the aforementioned chasms. Essentially, this thesis does not just seek to tell the story of prostitution in interwar Liverpool, but critically rethinks about how we should construct, deconstruct, and reconstruct the histories of prostitution more broadly. And it is this point which concerns the following chapter on methodology.

“To live in any period of the past ... is above all, to regard the study of the original sources not as a preliminary drudgery to the making of history, but as its most significant function” (Gailbraith 2000: 24).

### **(2:0) Introduction**

Historians face many methodological challenges. Documents we know existed may not have survived (or at least cannot be traced), material deposited within archives may be piecemeal and incomplete, potential material may remain unsorted and thus un-catalogued within archives, and issues of Data Protection may mean that evidence exists but to all intents and purposes is futile because it is inaccessible at present. In this sense, historical researchers and historical research is very much at the mercy of, and fashioned by, what data already exists, and crucially, is accessible. These are dilemmas rarely experienced at the same stage or in the same way by, for example, colleagues working in the social sciences. Although the subject-focus may well be related to that of the historian's research, the social scientist's typical (though not exclusive) chronological focus upon the present of near-past grants them the possibility to engineer their own data material and thus the scope to tailor the nature of their data in accordance to a more pre-determined body of research questions as oppose to in accordance/ response to the data itself. The historian's experience of gathering primary material is, essentially, one of detection not creation, although oral histories obviously mark an exception to this rule. In light of these issues surrounding the collection of historical data, by the time we reach the stage of 'writing up', it is evident that the sources are there, that they are adequate in size and scope, and therefore perhaps it is unsurprising that historians believe that the findings speak to justify the soundness of methodology. As Godfrey explains, “for historians the sources they exploit (whether archival, oral, or visual) are the methodology” (Godfrey 2011: 159). The impetus is placed upon gathering and then analysing the sources, and rarely is it thought necessary to explicitly document the methodology employed to get from the former to the latter. The interpretative difficulties associated with the analysis of material is often viewed as an extension of the practical difficulties involved with the acquisition of the material in the first place, and both are usually well trodden and commonly used paths. So, as Godfrey also points out, “therefore when one historian acknowledges that they drew upon oral

evidence in their studies, another historian nods, implicitly accepting the limitations of the methodology” (ibid: 159 ).

In recent years, the pursuit to create an academic environment where historians – specifically crime and social historians – and social scientists – specifically criminologists and sociologists – work together in light of common research areas (what King has called the “project of a common journey”), has served to expose the comparative absence of explicit methodological rationale within historical research (King 1999: 162; see also D’Cruze *et al* 2005; Emsley 2005; Godfrey 2011). Of course, social scientists have not come out of this project unscathed, having been accused of failing to historically contextualise contemporary issues and draw upon parallels with the past (King 1999; D’Cruze *et al* 2005). If such academic alliances are to succeed in overcoming an arrangement once described by Burke as the “dialogue of the deaf,” and in justifying breaking down the barriers of academic snobbery, isolationism and indifference, then a serious reassessment of the role methodology should play within history is necessary (Burke 1992: 2). As D’Cruze, Jackson and Rowbotham have recently argued, it “seems that both approaches can very usefully engage in dialogue” (D’Cruze *et al* 2005: 145). This methodological challenge currently facing historians is something which I attempt to respond to within this chapter, and indeed, take up over the course of the thesis. The point is that there is a need for historians to move away from implicit methodologies and towards explicit methodologies, after all it is likely that in a field where new sources are constantly becoming available and new techniques are being employed to interpret them, there will come a time when the ‘nod’ made to one another means nothing.

The first section of this chapter considers the methodological trends and techniques which have dominated the historiography of prostitution, arguing that typically historians within this field have been particularly open and self-reflective with regards to their methodological trajectories. More specifically, I establish the common methodological difficulties which historians of prostitution have faced, and explore their various strategies for reconciliation. In light of this discussion, I move on to explain the rationale behind my methodological approach, exploring

some of the interpretative issues associated with the sources I consult, as well as issues of accessibility specific to studies of early twentieth crime.

## **(2:1) Methodological approaches to prostitution**

The historiography of prostitution, I argue, largely appears to mark an exception to this apparent tendency for historians to avoid explicit and detailed methodological reflection, with scholars increasingly providing palpable and lengthy discussions of the methodologies which guide and frame their research. Reasons for this presence of methodological awareness are varied, and indeed vary between scholar, geographical and chronological focus, epistemological conviction and theoretical framework, but for the purpose of clarity – and relevance to my own research – I will focus upon three common objectives which make even the most reluctant of historian contemplate the possibilities and parameters of their methodology, aloud. The first, and perhaps most pervasive reason, is concerned with making sense of a limitation in methodology which plagues any historical study of prostitution; how we go about creating what Henderson has called a “prostitute-centred history” (Henderson 1997: 239). In many ways, the study of prostitution as a freestanding academic topic initially emerged out of the aspirations of social and feminist historians who sought to study “marginalised groups who had seemingly been ‘hidden from history’” (Cocks and Houlbrook 2006: 5). Whilst the vast body of literature we now have testifies to a vibrant research area, the reality is that as scholars we have tended to further obscure the historical ‘voice’ of the prostitute rather than rescue it, by reconstructing the history of those who regulated, reformed and moralised her. This is fundamentally a consequence of practicality. National and local archives are plentiful in material chronicling the policies and practices of organisations whose administrative records have become illuminating historical documents, from police forces and women police patrols, to vigilance and purity groups, lock hospitals and reformatory institutions. Similarly, parliamentary debates, legislative enactments and reviews, and criminal statistics are widely available. To glean a more individualistic perspective on prostitution we can consult memoirs, autobiographies and the personal correspondence of those who came into contact with prostitutes through the aforementioned channels. In contrast, rarely does the archival material associated with such organisations allow us to engage with the prostitute herself. Where she is seen it is only through the hostile and often moralistic gaze and tentacles of law and reform. Where she is heard



her words are often distorted by the staged and condemning arena to which she has been subjected. As Brookes has argued, it was middle class and upper class women “with the leisure and self-consciousness to keep a diary” who recorded their life experiences (Brookes 1986:93). Certainly, it would be very rare to find instances in history where women involved in prostitution have documented their encounters, especially given the tactics involved in preserving one’s image through maintaining discretion, avoiding feelings of shame and accusations of deviance. This is a methodological limitation concerned with the availability – or rather unavailability – of sources, and one that most historians have to concede to. The reality is, as Luddy has recently noted, “the prostitute revealed by most of the documentary records is a woman created by those who watched and discussed her” (Luddy 2007: 8). Scholars have sought to reverse this fixation with the apparatuses of control in a number of ways. White’s study of prostitution in twentieth century Nairobi, for example, has made a key methodological departure from previous historical works through the incorporation of prostitute oral testimonies (White 1990). However, the potential to compile oral history is something which seems to become less viable as each generation of scholars passes, or at least until we move our chronological gaze further into the twentieth century. Thus, others, such as Walkowitz, Littlewood and Mahood have challenged the discourse of victimhood by looking at the ways in which the prostitute engineered strategies of resistance as a means of obtaining some semblance of personal control and agency (see, Walkowitz 1980; Mahood 1990; Littlewood and Mahood 1991). So, for example, in her seminal publication, Walkowitz used the regulatory sphere as her focus – in this case the lock hospital – but offered a more nuanced understanding of the location of power within this setting by looking at soup riots as a means of dissidence and agency (Walkowitz 1980: 216-216). Similarly, Littlewood’s and Mahood’s research has been concerned with exploring sites of prostitute power, arguing that high drop-out rates within the Glasgow Magdalene represented a “counter strategy of resistance” by the inmates (Littlewood and Mahood 1991: 161). Unlike Finnegan, who had read such drop-outs in the context of York as a sign of failure and inadequacy on the part of both the girls and the institution directors, Littlewood and Mahood claimed that, “the ‘intractability’ of the inmates, of which matron after matron complained, is an index of the ‘real’ subjects’ struggles against their incorporation into the ‘ideal’ subject statuses held out to them” (ibid: 169; see also, Finnegan 1979). However, as previously

noted, such studies are limited by their inevitable inability to reconstruct prostitute experiences before the point of regulatory curtailment.

The second reason is an extension of the first, and is concerned with moving beyond an exclusive focus upon regulation in order to avoid unwittingly reproducing the rhetoric of criminality and deviancy and/or victimhood which dominates the historical evidence bequeathed by those who were mobilised to comment upon prostitutes, whether out of fear, disdain, or pity. This danger has been particularly well documented by White who has argued that:

“the continued use of metaphors of pollution and passivity in recent scholarship reveals how many of the categories of Acton or Parent-Duchatelet have been taken to heart, and how often even analytical studies of prostitution have identified with regulationists’ and reformers’ values” (White 1990: 7).

For White, the academic language used to analyse prostitution should not be one which echoes the language of regulation and reform, but one which is created “from the work and experiences of prostitutes themselves” (ibid: 10). Of course, this is a sentiment arrived at from a position of relative methodological privilege, given that White was able to conduct oral testimonies based upon the experiences of seventy former Nairobi prostitutes. Gilfoyle has adopted a more pessimistic stance, arguing that the depth of subjectivity, fabrication and myth-making intrinsic to the sources we work with as scholars of prostitution renders the construction of ‘prostitute-centred’ histories an unrealistic pursuit:

“most sources are so embedded in discourses of pleasure, reform, and regulation that any effort to reconstruct the lived experiences of these women is nearly impossible... Even the numerous and detailed oral histories of Nairobi prostitutes collected by White are ultimately mediated by self-perceptions, which are constructed in part by other voices and institutions” (Gilfoyle 1999: 138-139).

However, the growing trend for scholars to consider the daily economic activities of prostitutes has proven that alternative methodologies to oral testimony which retrieve not the literal voice of prostitutes but rather what I term a “historical” voice (and similarly Hershatter has called an “audible trace”) – constructed by piecing together prostitute actions and moments of self-representation – is a viable and sound means of avoiding complete recourse to the vocabulary of vice (Hershatter 1997: 25). Drawing on a diverse range of sources, including travel writings, guidebooks, newspapers, popular fiction, social commentaries, social surveys, census data, films, autobiographies and memoirs, as well as the regulatory material itself, scholars have worked to challenge narratives of victimhood and vice by highlighting the potential for individual agency, choice and financial stability, whilst recognising that of course, these are all relational and fluid concepts. So, whilst Rosen argues that it is misleading to understand prostitutes as “passive victims of impersonal economic and social forces,” so too does Walkowitz warn that we must understand such agency and choice in the context of “restrictive conditions” and limited alternative labour opportunities (Rosen 1982: xxv; Walkowitz 1980: 134). Others, such as Slater have explored the complex relationship prostitutes had with their pimps, showing that passivity and victimhood could still operate beyond the realm of legal and reformatory control (Slater 2007b: 53-74). However, just as we have seen was the case within the regulatory sphere, the everyday activities and interactions of prostitutes with clients, colleagues and pimps rarely embodied a clear-cut or one-sided distribution of power and control. As Slater notes, “pimps capitalized on the street prostitutes’ need for protection,” often taking large cuts of the earnings and living up to their moniker as ‘bullies’ (Slater 2007a: 199). Yet, on the other hand prostitutes capitalized on the physical prowess and reputation of their pimps in order to secure territorial rights over the most lucrative streets of the West End, as well as accessing superior housing by using pimps’ “posing as a respectable tenant looking for a flat” (ibid: 199). Many more prostitutes resisted – or simply did not encounter – pimps altogether. By asking questions such as how much can a prostitute expect to earn, how did earnings vary between location, age, season, nationality, how did prostitution shape women’s social opportunities and cultural experiences, and so on, the methodological focus has shifted to the everyday as oppose to the exceptional, and in doing so has brought us closer to the cultures of prostitution in their ‘natural’ environments, rather than after the point of curtailment and

intervention. As Henderson has noted, in directing attention towards prostitute experiences it is likely that the regulatory sphere “will come to be seen as only a part (and perhaps a very minor part at that) of prostitute’s lives – subverted as much as submitted to” (Henderson 1997: 239).

The third reason which has forced historians of prostitution to be particularly self-reflective with regards to the possibilities and limitations of their methodologies stems from key lines of defence any historical study of marginality must be ready to offer. Firstly, we must be able to respond to those who ask what role can the peripheral, the atypical, the infrequent, play in broadening our understandings of past societies, customs and cultures, when it seemingly speaks very little of the hegemonic, the everyday, the status quo? We must also be prepared to answer to those who challenge the relevance such studies can have to mainstream scholarship, in doing so this becomes a dual pursuit where it is not only the historical subject we seek to move from the margins to the centre, but also the standing of the sub-discipline itself within the field of history. As Levine has noted:

“Social history is caught too often between microstudies of ever smaller ‘communities’ and the totalizing of generalized theses. Prostitution deals with relatively small numbers of disparate and displaced persons, difficult to track and even more difficult to elucidate. Ellen Ross and Rayna Rapp have argued that community practices are termini for larger systems. It is the challenge of social history to see and draw clearly that relationship” (Levine 1993: 269).

Certainly, there is a danger that in the process of shedding light on those previously ‘hidden from history’ more emphasis has been placed on construction rather than contextualisation, and perhaps the terminology of marginal studies has at times been taken too literally (Cocks and Houlbrook 2006: 5). However, the literature does testify to a cohort of research which is particularly sensitive to the complexities of prostitution. As Gilfoyle contends, “prostitution has a historical meaning broader than biological sex or genital gratification” (Gilfoyle 1999: 140). Indeed, in the process of negotiating the methodological difficulties facing scholars of prostitution (as outlined above), it is both necessary and inevitable that larger narratives and methodologies are engaged with, and links between the micro and macro are made and articulated. To study

prostitution is to study politics, economics, societies, cultures, and to understand prostitution is to understand that the act itself and the discourses and responses surrounding it can at once be posited as a portal into, a product of, and an indicator to the micro and macro environments it occupies. Guillas has claimed that “different societies perceive crime differently ... and the attention and attitude to it are always peculiar to the social and historical context” (Guillas 1986:12). This can certainly also be said of perceptions of sexual behaviours and gender roles, and in this sense *context* is not just about *contextualisation*, it is a vehicle through which the mutually reinforcing relationships between prostitution and societies can be explored, and the usefulness of such binary concepts as marginal and mainstream can be re-evaluated. Even some of the earliest publications on prostitution made these connections. As noted in chapter one, the C.D. Acts – a seemingly tangential and geographically limited programme of sexual control – has been shown by Walkowitz as an instance where politicians and independent pressure groups alike were prepared to be “mobilised over sex” (Walkowitz 1980: 5). Similarly, McHugh uses the trajectory of legislative enactment and repeal to explore not so much how they effected ideas of sexuality and gender but how sexual law was able to impact “upon the party-political system” of Victorian England (Harrison 1982: 564). Others, such as Bernstein, Corbin, Werth and Slater have all used prostitution as a lens through which to not only locate transactions of state power onto its citizens, but also to identify – and often challenge – whole nation-states or municipalities and their policies. So, for Corbin, “the history of prostitution in the nineteenth century provides us with a particularly fruitful means of understanding that period” in French history, and for Bernstein – as Gilfoyle has noted – the regulation of prostitution in Imperial Russia “uniquely embraced larger questions concerning the role of the tsarist state” (Corbin 1990: 123). Both Werth and Slater have drawn on Foucault’s theories of power to challenge the idea that power in relation to prostitution followed a top-down trajectory, whereby it emanated from the level of the state – the orchestrators of legislation – through the various regulatory channels – the executors of law – and onto the prostitute- the subject of legislation (see Slater 2007: 23-24; Werth 1994: 1-15). Similarly, my thesis rejects a monolithic reading of power, arguing instead that it resided in numerous echelons and that transactions of power can be traced in multiple registers between the state, local, group and individual levels. Gilfoyle has noted upon reflection of literature from the past two decades that scholars are “as

attentive to political and economic questions as those concerning sexuality and gender” (Gilfoyle 1999: 120). Subsequently, we have arrived at a point where the sheer scope of areas considered, disciplines touched upon, and theories engaged with in the literature, speaks for itself when answering to claims that prostitution is but an inconsequential act and its study is but a marginal pursuit within history.

In the process of negotiating these methodological difficulties and in carving out a legitimate space within the historical agenda, scholars of prostitution have had no choice but to confront and rationalise their methodologies, in doing so often paying as much attention to what has been beyond the realm of possibility as to what has been achieved. Yet, the corollary of this degree of self-reflection has culminated in much more than just the presence of methodology. It has no doubt led to the growing tendency for methodological eclecticism, where seemingly disparate types of data and techniques of analysis have been carefully crafted together in the pursuit to reconcile an appropriate methodological framework which capitalises on, rather than concedes to, the problems of historicising prostitution.

### **(2:2) My methodological focus**

At best the methodological focus of my research can be described as a compromise between my pre-determined anticipations of this project and the practicalities of availability and access which I have encountered along the way. It has been fashioned by both the methodological advances made in histories of prostitution and other sub-disciplines of history (namely crime history, the history of sexuality, and cultural history), and in response to some continuing gaps in knowledge and disproportionalities of focus. In addition, my methodology has sought to achieve a semblance of balance regarding two key observations made by scholars of prostitution themselves, both of which have greatly informed this study. Firstly, as Karras has suggested, the task for the historian is to, “steer between the danger of portraying prostitutes as victims by concentrating too much on how others saw them and the danger of decontextualising them by concentrating too much on their agency” (Karras 1996: 222). And, as Gilfoyle has commented in response to what he understands as a scholarly move away from traditional structuralist history and towards post-modernist interests in the discursive; “archival and empirically focused study has been increasingly replaced by greater

emphasis on representations and discourse. One danger here is that historians may leapfrog over structural analysis and proceed to deconstruct commercial sex before they have established the composition and construction of prostitution” (Gilfoyle 1999: 138).

Together, all these points have led to the four central themes of this thesis and a methodology which seeks to be sophisticated and multi-layered enough to bolster and exploit them. These themes are; the regulation of prostitution, prostitute experiences, representations, and, the socio-economic climate. To borrow a well-versed quotation from Hershatter, history is a “messy process” (Hershatter 1997: 32). My methodological approach is certainly ‘messy’, moving between the national and local perspective, drawing on quantitative and qualitative data, looking at official, quasi-official and populist responses, darting from the micro to the macro level and back again, and focusing on both the material and the discursive. It is concerned with asking empirically deduced questions such as what happened, where, when, how, and to what extent. It seeks to locate the multiple discourses and narratives of prostitution, from representations in popular literature and film, to parliamentary debates, and from academic theorising to public responses as played out in the national and local press. Yet, at the same time it wants to do more than just reveal what happened or what was said, but ask how such data contributed to the classification, identification, understanding and treatment of prostitution, and as such is just as concerned with the power of figurative meanings and representations as it is with literal events, practices and experiences. So, as Hershatter has also said, history needs to be listened to and read in “multiple registers” (ibid: 32). Thus, although these four themes have been identified for the purpose of clarity, I am keen to highlight their permeability and explore the ways in which they were symbiotically connected.

At its simplest level this can be seen in terms of how prostitute experiences could be shaped by regulatory measures and legal curtailment, and vice versa. At a more complex level it can be about how, for example, popular representations and perceptions were shaped by legal and political discourses, and vice versa. Or, how prostitute practices were motivated by or judged in accordance to the social and economic climate. Untangling this interactive web is largely a question of source diversity and methodological analysis.

### **(2:3) Representations**

Previous studies of interwar prostitution have tended to focus on the trajectory of politics, charting in particular, the prominent pressure-groups and individuals who were seen to mobilise state responses to prostitution (see, for example, Slater 2007; Laite 2008). Whilst this study does not depart completely from this tract, a more nuanced approach, I contend, in which moments of political lobbying come to be understood as an element within – rather than necessarily the mouthpiece for or the manifestation of – broader narratives, may provide us with a more composite portrait of prostitution in this period. As such, the focus moves between the populist and the academic, the legal and the moral, the medical and the political, drawing on newspapers and social investigations as much as it does on the more conventional ‘expert’ and ‘official’ sources. On one level, this approach is about exploring contemporary discourses of prostitution and the prostitute, and establishing the divergent spaces and mediums from which such narratives emerged and were transmitted. On another, it is contended that such sources in themselves functioned as powerful components within the construction, absorption and/or rejection of conceptualisations of prostitution and the prostitute. For example, as Bingham has argued in relation to the cultural importance of the print press in interwar Britain, in a period which saw the circulation of the daily newspaper double so that by 1939 “some two thirds of the population regularly saw a daily newspaper,” it represented the “most important channel of information about contemporary life” (Bingham 2004: 3). And, if as Mort has argued the law functions at a level which is “positively educative rather than just repressive”, then legal discourses of the prostitute were likely to have contributed to the fashioning of societal and cultural understandings of the bounds of appropriate and inappropriate feminine sexuality (Mort 1987: 104). In such a way, this line of enquiry seeks to answer to Joan Scott’s call for historians to examine how exactly “categories like marginal/central, normal/abnormal are made in the first place” (quoted in Cocks and Houlbrook 2006:6).

### **(2:4) Regulation and control**

If scholars of British prostitution have been guilty – as Henderson has reasoned – of a fixation with the regulatory history of this subject, of ‘opting’ to primarily chronicle the experiences “of those who placed themselves in authority over prostitutes”, as oppose to the prostitutes themselves, then this consequential literature of dominance which they have constructed has also been culpable of



disproportionalities and the procreation of chasms in knowledge (Henderson 1997: 238). As historians in recent years have consciously moved their research away from the C.D. Acts of the 1860s -which featured so heavily in the early literature - and towards alternative arenas of control, namely the reformatory system, narratives of centralised legislative regulation, review and repeal, have given way to analyses of the less homogenised regulatory tentacle of reform and prevention at the localised level. Taking the existing literature as a collective body of research, we are presented with a history of prostitution which extends from the construction of the written law at one end of the spectrum, to how the prostitute was treated after the point in which this legal curtailment came into motion at the other end. However, it would seem that the evolution of the British historiography - in its quest to retreat from a top-down approach to prostitution – has largely skipped over the regulatory element which sits in the middle of, and connects the aforementioned strands together in the control narrative; what we may term as the ‘front-line of prostitution control’. This investigation seeks to readdress this conceptual imbalance through an analysis of the official, quasi-official and voluntary ‘front-line’ policing of prostitution in interwar Liverpool. Drawing on the largely unexplored archival material of the Liverpool City Police Force (LCPF), the Liverpool Women Police Patrols (LWPP), and the Liverpool branch of the Jewish Association for the Protection of Girls and Women (JAPGW), I attempt to highlight what for many prostitutes would have been the first – and indeed most frequent - point of contact with the regulatory system. In expanding the chronological coverage past the nineteenth century my research is able to shed light on these female regulatory bodies (the LWPP and the LJAPGW) which were unique to the twentieth century, and, which hitherto have not been considered with specific relation to prostitution (see chapter one). Particular attention is placed upon how these different bodies were able to co-exist, points of inter-agency alliance and dependency, referrals and the apportioning and/or securing of responsibility, geographies of policing, motivations and methods for regulating, inter-professional rivalries, and the legitimacy of control. This leads into the second methodological anticipation of my regulatory research.

Historians have tended to direct their focus towards specific agencies and spheres of control, producing studies which often fail to locate and contextualise such bodies within the wider

regulatory networks of particular localities. Subsequently, I attempt to begin to reverse this trend by extending my focus across the spectrum of control, paying attention to how regulatory bodies not only operated internally, but also how they interacted with each other as a collective. In doing so, I am interested in gauging the extent and breadth of agencies involved in the regulation of prostitution within Liverpool, in looking at inter-professional alliances and rivalries, in understanding individual's movements within this network and between specific institutions, at looking at points of entry into and departure from the system of control, and in determining broader trends in the landscape of control i.e. the dwindling use of the reformatory sphere and the growing preference for probation. Another advantage of this approach, I contend, is that it enables the scholar to establish points of commonality and conflict regarding the aims of regulation between these organisations, and in doing so seeks to challenge some of the existing theories which have been deduced by historians who have only considered a particular tentacle of control but have made sweeping generalisations based upon these limit cases referring to control *per se*. So, for example, Bartley's investigation into the reformatory aspect of prostitution control in nineteenth century England demonstrates how directing focus to a specific element of regulation can produce a skewed understanding of prostitution more generally. Although her study looks exclusively at the various reform institutions set up to house prostitutes, she concludes that in late nineteenth century England prostitution control was guided by the aspiration to eradicate this 'social evil'; "prostitution commanded attention from the church, the state, the medical profession, philanthropists, feminists and others, each of which offered a range of solutions to control and ultimately to end it" (Bartley 2000: 1). Although the desire to eliminate prostitution definitely underpinned the overarching intentions of certain facets of the regulatory system – predominantly amongst those directed by religious sentiment such as the reformatory homes – the reality would seem that across the board day-to-day practices of control suggest that utopian anticipations to exterminate gave way to more modest and realistic aims of management. By looking at the various branches of control in Liverpool, I argue that there was no universal discourse regarding the aims or ideals of controllers, and if anything, the evidence suggests that there was predominantly an acceptance – albeit a reluctant one – that prostitution was ultimately always going to survive and thus regulation was driven by the objective of policing out of visibility rather than existence. This

becomes clear if we look at the actions of the LCPF and the LWPP, for example, where their focus on curtailing the public disorder of street soliciting as oppose to clamping down on the less publicly visible areas of prostitution such as brothel work concurs with this policy of management rather than eradication. Indeed, many of the organisation I look at would have simply failed to exist had it not been for the continuation of prostitution, and thus eradication of prostitution was a double-edge sword which would have also culminated in the eradication of themselves. For the JAPGW, patrolling the streets and dealing with troublesome Jewish girls was driven by an overriding desire to preserve the religious reputation of Liverpool's Jewish community, and for the magistrates it was about issuing fitting punishments for prostitution whilst conceding to the fact that often such punishments did little to deter them from committing further offences. As Hershatter has said in response to the multiple narratives of, and responses to prostitution in the context of Shanghai, "the dissonances between them are arguably where the most interesting mapping can be done" (Hershatter 1997: 27).

Therefore, I argue that to abandon the study of prostitution control completely would be as misleading and restrictive as focussing upon it exclusively. To listen to the voice of the prostitute but ignore that of the regulator is to both underestimate the interactions between them and to decontextualise the conditions which the prostitute negotiated, regardless of whether she avoided or experienced some form of regulatory intervention. The point is that we must see regulation as an element within the prostitution labyrinth, as one part of the story, but one which was not necessarily detached from the prostitute experience. Thus, instead of retreating from the regulatory history, this investigation seeks to provide a more nuanced analysis of it, in doing so demonstrating that there are still chasms in knowledge to be remedied and methodological disproportionalities within the historiography of control which need to be counteracted.

## **(2:5) Experiences**

As previously discussed, the pursuit of recovering the literal historical voice of prostitutes is more often than not a methodological impossibility. My investigation negotiates – and somewhat reconciles – this dilemma by paying attention to what I term the ‘historical voice’ of the prostitute. There are three key components to this methodological approach (although there is a high level of overlap between them); the construction of general prostitute experiences within the regulatory sphere and/or using the regulatory material to establish key characteristics such as age, where they worked, what they could expect to earn and so on; the construction of specific life analysis grids of prostitutes as a means of looking at their experiences within the regulatory sphere, but also key events, places, people and experiences in their broader lives from birth to death; a close reading of the socio-economic climate which they lived, negotiated, worked in, and was judged by as a way of postulating for example, why they may have entered prostitution, what were the alternative opportunities available to them, and how did factors such as age, marital status, skills etc. impact upon these ‘decisions’ and ‘opportunities’. Together, these strands of analysis seek to establish a deepened understanding of who these women were, what they experienced, what role prostitution played in their broader life stories, and a general feeling for the place and time they inhabited. It is by no means a perfect or ideal methodology, but it is I believe, a viable and worthwhile methodology.

So, the first part of this process involves using the court registers, the LCPF, LWPP, and JAPGW annual reports, minute books, case registers, and memorandum, and the evidence presented to the SOC by the four Liverpool representatives as a way of excavating prostitute experiences, practices, customs and cultures. Particular attention is placed upon locating sites of prostitute power, charting the moments where resistance and compliance were deployed as a means of establishing some form of agency and control within the regulatory environment. The court registers provide a unique insight into the sexual geographies of interwar prostitution, detailing the street where each woman was soliciting (or at least where she was arrested), and the address where those arrested for brothel offences worked. This information is then plotted onto a series of maps, with analysis focussing on where prostitution occurred, patterns and trends, , contrasts between the different legislation used to arrest prostitutes), shifts and continuities in geographies between different years and different periods of the year, and the movements of specific prostitutes over a

longitudinal period. Of course, this information probably speaks more in terms of where the police patrolled and what areas they were keen to keep free from prostitution, but nevertheless in plotting approximately 400 cases per year it is probable that some semblance of accuracy can be deduced regarding the movements and workspaces of Liverpool's interwar prostitutes. In much the same way, I use the information detailed in the court registers to explore the average age of prostitutes for my sample years, how age varied in accordance to the type of prostitution being carried out, how age could impact upon the penalties received and the legislation used to arrest, and by simultaneously using the qualitative regulatory data I examine how age was a determinant in how much money a prostitute could expect to earn and how again this could fluctuate between different areas of the city. Once again, there are interpretative issues associated with this methodological approach. It is worth noting that many women would have given a false age as a means of avoiding revealing their true identities and being linked with previous crimes (although this is in itself a means of resistance), thus where discrepancies occur I use the census data as a means of confirmation. Also, for example, given their familiarity to the police, it is likely that older prostitutes would have been arrested more frequently than young prostitutes starting out in their careers, thus distorting the average age returns I have compiled. Professional partnerships between prostitutes, husbands and wives, and families can also be extracted from the court registers. For instance, there are cases of certain women always being arrested together, of husbands and wives or partners running brothels, and even of parents managing their daughters prostitute careers. Another aspect considered is the fluidity between different forms of prostitute work, with examples of women moving between brothel and street work and/or use street solicitation as a way to create business for the brothel they are working in. However, it is not just prostitute experiences which can be reconstructed through the regulatory material, but also the experiences of their clients, accomplices and managers. So, I am particularly interested in how sentences differed between the sexes, what was the probability where a prostitute was caught having carnal connections with a client that he too would be arrested and appear in court, what were the ages of the men using the services of prostitutes, and was there any sense of a move towards equal legal treatment between the sexes during this period? As this approach attempts to demonstrate, the regulatory material

offers the scholar a whole host of opportunities which challenge any rudimentary reading of such data as an obstruction to the recovery of prostitute experiences.

The second part of this approach uses the regulatory material as the starting point from which to identify women involved in prostitution, and then moves on to consider their experiences within and beyond the criminal justice system, through the deployment of the burgeoning methodological technique from the field of crime history; ‘whole-life analysis.’ My methodological approach has been broadly influenced by Corbin’s construction of prostitute profiles in his study of nineteenth century French prostitution, and reproduces closely the stylistic convention of ‘life grids’ which has been developed by Godfrey, Cox and Farrall. (see, Godfrey, Cox and Farrall 2007; *ibid* 2010). It uses the personal information detailed within the court registers as a way of chronicling their lives both retrospectively – from the point of birth – and prospectively – to the point of death. Using the census records, the BMD index, shipping registers, immigration records, parish records and newspaper articles, it seeks to establish the key events in an individual’s life, from place of birth to family history, migration activity to marriage, and childbearing to death. However, it does not depart from the regulatory material, instead it plots their activity within the CJS and their movements within the wider regulatory and social sphere such as the workhouse, reform institutions, prison and hospitals, as a way of attempting to deduce what life events may have caused their entry into crime, and similarly their departure, was there a correlation between prostitution and other types of offences committed, were prostitutes more likely to experience other forms of social control, how did family circumstances bear an influence on the course of an individual’s life, and so on. Moreover, I am interested in challenging the accuracy of many of the historical associations and assumptions surrounding prostitution by looking at factors such as, were they already married when they entered prostitution, did they go on to marry, were they widowed or separated, did they already have children, did pregnancy result in their departure from prostitution, did they go on to have children after, what was the typical length of a prostitute’s career, did their activity impact upon life expectancies, how many women were involved in domestic service, what was the average age of entering and leaving prostitution, did they remain in their communities during and after their engagement with prostitution, could certain hardships such

as unemployment, the death of a family member or the breakdown of a marriage propel women into prostitution? Ultimately, this is about using a micro-study approach to ask larger questions and test the accuracy and applicability of the dominant discourses which prevailed in the historical context and in the subsequent historiography. Does my 'whole-life analysis' of prostitutes, for example, challenge or support the early twentieth century belief that prostitution was a lifestyle rather than an occupation, and one which had been driven by personal pathology, feeble-mindedness and depravity as oppose to economic hardship and lack of alternative employment options? Similarly, do the life experiences of these women corroborate with or depart from scholarly arguments that these women were marginalised from society and their communities, that they were what Walkowitz calls an 'outcast group', beyond the realms of femininity and the parameters of marriage and motherhood? These are all the nuances of personal experiences which are only illuminated when the methodological focus is broad enough to look beyond activity within the regulatory sphere, but interestingly only has significance when it is analysed in conjunction with the regulatory data. This is another important reason why the regulation of prostitution should not be abandoned.

However, this methodological technique is not without its difficulties. Ultimately, it only refers to those women who appeared in the court registers and experienced some form of legal intervention. As such, it is likely to overlook those women who had ephemeral and short-lived experiences with prostitution, and concentrate instead on those who made a career out of it. The use of aliases and false ages was common practice, and thus it is particularly difficult to confidently trace a complete profile of an individual's criminal activity. Therefore, the life grids I construct only include those women who I am able to confidently associate with particular crimes, where I have substantial evidence of the aliases they used, and am able to match their ages. Given the tendency for prostitutes to move between cities and towns at different points of the year, one of the main limitations of my analysis is that it can only feasibly refer to their activity within Liverpool. Also, the sheer size of the petty session court registers for Liverpool mean that the process of tracing is particularly laborious and time-consuming, and it is reasonable to assume that there may be instances where I have missed a court entry, where I have not looked further back into the registers and not extended my search far enough forward. It would have been fairly common for

prostitutes (especially professional prostitutes) to have no fixed abode, moving between lodging houses, hostels and other forms of temporary accommodation, and therefore would not appear within the census returns. It is also quite possible that they may have been out working on the night that the census was taken, and as such it is intrinsically difficult to pinpoint a prostitutes address and/or to be sure that they lived there for any length of time. Working on early twentieth century prostitution also brings it own unique issues of source availability and access, that for example, a nineteenth century scholar would not be faced with. In terms of the census, the latest data currently available is for 1911. This means that it is impossible to trace an individual's address and household composition after this point, although the BMD index can be used to establish other key pieces of information, such as spouses, children, and date and place of death. However, essentially there will always inevitably be a period of uncertainty between these key dates. Another limitation regarding census utilisation for the early twentieth century is that it can provide more detailed life accounts of older prostitutes, with many of the younger prostitutes (especially those offending in the 1930s) not even having been born at the time of the 1911 census. A notable absence within this analysis has been that of employment history, and this is in itself linked to census availability. Given that many of these women would have been too young to work in 1911 it is rare to find details of previous employment, trades, and skills. Where information is detailed it often cites, for example, housewife, daughter, lodger, it would rarely detail casual and informal employment and would certainly not list 'prostitution' as an occupation. There are however, examples where women are listed as domestic servants which reveals their employment status, place of work and accommodation. There are also examples where women were in prison or the workhouse at the time of the 1911 census and these are all informative points of reference. Although this methodological approach is fraught with interpretative difficulties, gaps in information, and is a painstaking process, the insights into these women's lives which it allows for undeniably makes it a worthwhile and highly illuminating pursuit, and one which brings us closer to the 'historical voice' of interwar prostitutes.

## **(2:6) Socio-economic climate**



As previously stated prostitution has produced “repeated waves of uneasiness” throughout history, although the British historiography suggests that these ‘waves’ are typically incited by either controversial legislative enactments or alarming increases in the offence rates (Hall 1932: 5). In interwar Britain there was a distinct lack of legislative change (although as I discuss in chapter three this itself was often a reason for concern), and the statistics suggested prostitution offences were significantly retreating, so why exactly was prostitution constructed as such a pressing social, legal and political issue at this time? I argue that in part the answer lays not so much with the actions of prostitutes themselves but with the process of post-war reconstruction which worked to engineer the expanding cultural and social parameters of prostitution, yet interestingly also cultivated a series of strict moral and social codes (which at times extended to legal provisions) by which to determine, judge and regulate prostitutes. If, as I have already alluded to, immorality and criminality were sites of continual debate over the interwar years, then they certainly were not the only ones. Together with gender, race, Empire, sexuality, youth, citizenship and domesticity, these tropes formed the basis for the programme of post-war reconstruction, and as such were heavily contested terrains. Reasserting the traditional boundaries of femininity through the promotion of domesticity, or identifying national boundaries along racial lines, for example, were seen as indicative to reconciling some semblance of order and thus solace following the chaos of war. It is argued that the emotional, social and cultural upheaval caused by the Great War remained a constant in the nation’s psyche throughout the period. As Hall noted in the 1930s:

“... it was the precipitating cause of a general breakdown of accepted beliefs and tenets. It was the cause of immense strain and stress, both mental and physical, which, temporarily affecting behaviour, started certain habits of thought and conduct as a result. Many artificial barriers erected by social tradition were swept aside as mere impeding formalities – which some of them undoubtedly were. And in the train of action, almost feverish in their intensity, and a questioning of many sanctions and of most social values. (ibid: 9).

As this investigation seeks to demonstrate, in this climate prostitution could be positioned as an issue which touched upon, threatened and undermined all these elements of reconstruction – i.e.

through the promotion of inter-racial relationships and sexual relations outside of marriage – yet at the same time certain forms of prostitution – i.e. amateur prostitution – were constructed, defined and legitimised by their perceived failure to conform to these very conditions of reconstruction. This climate was therefore strangely both hostile to and conducive of prostitution.

However, it would be misleading to suggest that the route of prostitution in interwar Britain was completely guided by, and shaped in response to, the process of reconstruction. Coincidentally, there were a series of developments in the mass popularisation of the national press, the cinema, travel-writings and social commentaries, and the advent of academic criminology and the social sciences, which all combined to deliberate, publicise and transmit these discourses faster and wider than ever before. Similarly, fears over, for example, a declining middle-class birth rate, dwindling marriage levels and a rise in divorce, all served to construct prostitution as a subordinate act which was corroding the traditional values and institutions of hegemonic society. In this climate, as Humphries has argued, what the prostitute threatened, embodied and exacerbated in her being, was seen to be “putting the very future of the British race at risk” (Humphries 1988: 87). As outlined in chapter one, interwar prostitution – its practice, regulation and representation – was very much indicative of the wider societal mood which embraced both Victorian and latter-day tenets, and thus, perhaps unsurprisingly many of the discourses surrounding prostitution had their antecedents in the previous century. In particular, sexological and eugenic theorising experienced something of a renaissance in the interwar period, as did ideas about social purity and the concept of ‘moral miasma’, which in many ways replaced fears over the literal spread of disease that had somewhat subsided after the war. Essentially, in order to understand prostitution in the context of interwar Britain it is necessary to understand that the social and cultural arena in which the prostitute existed functioned not simply as a passive backdrop to her experiences but rather as an active component within the engineering of particular forms of transgression and their reception.

## **(2:7) Conclusion**

In an ideal world past prostitutes would have left behind rich and detailed documentary evidence for the convenience of future historians. For obvious and understandable reasons this is rarely the

case and even where it is such primary source material is always mediated by its own set of interpretative issues and difficulties. This chapter has set out to chronicle the methodological problems which have commonly faced historians of prostitution, in doing so, highlighting how within this field methodological focus and content is dictated as much by what evidence is not available and/or accessible as by what evidence is. Furthermore, it has argued that in negotiating these difficulties and formulating alternative frameworks for study, scholars have forged particularly close relationships with their methodologies, and most importantly, in spite of – or perhaps because of these methodological barriers – they have produced sophisticated analyses of prostitution and engaged with historical narratives and sub-disciplines which challenge any view of prostitution and its historicisation as a marginal and irrelevant phenomenon. In light of these discussions, I have situated the methodological focus of my thesis, emphasising the ways in which it has been fashioned by the wider historiography as well as by the desire to counteract prevailing chasms in knowledge and methodological oversights. This is not to say that it is by any means an ideal methodology, and there remains a number of pitfalls, in part as a result of source availability - for example, the records for Walton Prison have not survived and thus there is no way of gleaning prostitute experiences within this sphere – and in part because of a broader reconstructive issue all historians are beset with; ‘knowing’ what really happened. However, this thesis does not subscribe to the belief that there is *a* historical truth, but as this chapter has established, that there are multiple truths, multiple narratives and multiple experiences. As Hershatter has said, “rather than search for the ‘past out there’, we need to triangulate the shifting relationship between what was recorded, who was recording it, and ourselves” (Hershatter 1997: 13).

## **Section Two: Representations and Discourses**

### **Chapter Three: Political and Legal Discourses of Prostitution**

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“The attitude of English law to prostitution may be summed up briefly. English law takes no cognizance of prostitution as such. It punishes only certain offences associated with prostitution. The severest penalties are attached to procuration or rape (particularly of the young or incapable) and to all forms of exploitation for immoral purposes. Prostitution itself, as between prostitutes and customers, is punished only if the process of obtaining custom is supposed to be likely to offend members of the public. Law respecting this class of offence have remained unaltered for many years.” [G.M. Hall, ‘Prostitution and Sex Promiscuity in Several Countries at the Present Time’, unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Liverpool, 1932, p.172]

#### **(3:0) Regulation 40d: A Sign of things to come?**

On the 22<sup>nd</sup> March 1918, the government implemented regulation 40d under the Defence of the Realm Act (DORA). With unnerving echoes of the provisions which had made the C.D. Acts so controversial in the nineteenth century, this war-time measure – which crucially did not require the assent of parliament - sanctioned the following:

“That any woman who has sexual intercourse with a soldier or a sailor can be arrested. Any woman who solicits or speaks to, for this purpose, a soldier or a sailor can be arrested. She can then be taken to a police-station and may then be remanded for a week in order that she may be examined either by her own doctor or the prison doctor to see whether she has venereal disease” (*HoC Debates*, vol.107, 19 June 1918, col.445).

Just three years previously, in April 1915, a similar legislative measure had been enacted in regulation 13a of DORA, whereby women known to have been previously convicted of prostitution offences could be “expelled from any camp or training centre or any other place where any bodies of soldiers are to be found” (*ibid*: col. 447). In the same year, the Clubs (Temporary Provisions) Act, “prohibited the use of Club premises for the habitual resort of prostitutes,” and made specific reference to “members of the army and navy” (Hall 1932: 169). Unlike 40d, 13a and the Clubs Act were levelled specifically against the prostitute, and were guided by the notion that restricting

women's access to His Majesty's troops could prevent the spread of venereal disease. By contrast, 40d, potentially referred to all women, and as one parliamentary objector observed, was a reactionary provision which ultimately "allowed the opportunities for temptation" and then "tried to get rid of those who are diseased" after the point in which disease could have potentially been contracted ( *H of C Debates*, vol. 107, 19 June 1918, col. 447). As Smart has argued in relation to the Australian regulation of venereal disease, during the war, there "was a heightened emphasis on state power and subordination of the individual, on bureaucracy and surveillance – a symbolic deployment of discipline and force at home that paralleled their actual deployment on the battlefield" (Smart 1998: 10). Whilst these provisions all marked instances in which the state attempted to capitalise on the pretext of the 'war effort' in order to play an increasingly interventionist role in the control of both the medical and moral sexual health of individuals, for many 40d symbolised a potential submission of liberty too far. Given that the British experience of regulating venereal disease on the front lines, as Beardsley points out, demonstrated very little in the way of discipline and force until the latter months of the war, perhaps it is hardly surprising that deploying regulation on the homefront proved to be so problematic (Beardsley 1976: 189-202). In France, prior to the 18<sup>th</sup> March 1918, British troops had been allowed to "patronize the regulated brothels, or maisons tolerees, which the French maintained for their troops," with the view that sexual contact within a controlled environment was essential to sustaining morale (ibid: 190). Just as this measure to prohibit the troops' access to licensed brothels was met with anger on the front, when 40d came into motion back in Britain just four days later, as anticipated, it caused severe agitation.

In 1916, the report from the Royal Commission on Venereal Disease set about dampening murmurs which had been circulating – particularly within military circles – that the only way to deal with the current problem was to reinstate the C.D. Acts. Although the Commission argued that syphilis was a much more prolific problem than originally thought - with estimations that no less than "10 per cent. of the whole population in the large cities" were infected - from a health point of view, they suggested, "the C.D. Acts were a complete failure" (see, Garrett Fawcett 1917: 155-159). Similarly, the suffragist Millicent Garrett Fawcett, warned that such legislation would install

a false sense of security among men who believed that “irregular sexual intercourse can be made safe by legislation” (ibid: 156). What Fawcett and the Commission did advocate, nevertheless, was a greater recognition that venereal disease was “a moral as well as a physical evil and should be combated with moral as well as with physical weapons” (ibid: 158). This medico-moral hypothesis was also endorsed by AMSH president, Dr. Helen Wilson, who argued that “the real fight is a fight with prostitution itself” (ibid: 158). Given the escalating eugenic based concerns regarding the health implications V.D. were believed to be having upon both the existing and future population, and that the Commission had shown syphilis to be a problem endemic to all socio-economic classes, regulating venereal disease was positioned as an issue of both national and personal urgency.

If 13a and the Clubs Act evidently failed in supplanting anxieties over venereal disease, the implementation of 40d failed in gaining both public and political support. Opposition focused upon two specific grievances. Firstly, in much the same way as feminist groups, religious bodies, and liberal politicians had been mobilised in the previous century to speak out against the intrinsic sexual double standard which underpinned the C.D. Acts, 40d was objected to on eerily similar grounds. Under this legislation, any woman who was subsequently found to have venereal disease - after being subjected to invasive medical examination - could face imprisonment for a period of up to six months, whilst as Liberal M.P. Mr. Lees-Hastings noted in April 1918, “no penalty of any sort is to be inflicted upon the soldier or the sailor who on his side infects a woman with venereal disease” (*HoC Debates*, vol. 107, 19 June 1918, col. 445). When, in April 1918, the HoC sat to discuss 40d for the first time since its implementation, it was clear that Lees-Hastings was not the only M.P. prepared to voice opposition. Not only was the sexual double standard objected to on moral and ethical grounds, but the practical difficulties and implications associated with targeting women was already believed to be aggravating rather than alleviating the spread of disease. Mr. Henry Chancellor, M.P. for Haggerston Division of Shoreditch, was particularly sceptical of the War Office’s intentions given that 13a already provided police with the potential to keep women away from troops. In response, advocates of 40d argued that troops were already controlled by equally as severe measures under military regulations, whereby, “any soldier who is guilty of concealing venereal disease is liable, by sentence of court-martial, to two years’ imprisonment”

(ibid: col. 445). However, as Chancellor pointed out, if a man is found to be free of disease he is absolved of any punishment, yet in the case of a woman she is not pardoned but rather charged for solicitation (ibid: col. 450). In this sense, 40d was not only culpable of promoting a sexual double standard but also of being a legislative provision which theoretically could doubly incriminate women. This idea that the War Office were making deliberate scapegoats of women deeply antagonised the AMSH, who joined forces with almost sixty other societies in the campaign against 40d (Laite 2008a: 212). This was a grievance further exacerbated by the fact that unlike previous legislation, 40d made no distinctions between the prostitute and the rest of the female population, a move that no doubt had been influenced in part by wartime panics surrounding ‘khaki fever.’ Supporters of this provision were keen to recite statistical information which positioned the amateur rather than the professional as the greatest purveyor of disease. For example, the Secretary of State for War claimed that his investigations had shown that:

“... men infected with venereal disease, in four-fifths of cases, caught it not from professional prostitutes ... but caught it from servant girls, shop girls, and others, whose own friends and families did not know of the habits into which they had fallen, and of whom not one in a thousand would come under the eye of the police...” (*HoC Debates*, vol. 107, 19 June 1918, col. 449).

However, those who mobilised in opposition to 40d were perturbed by the idea that the government were exploiting fears over medical contagion in order to supplant the panic surrounding feminine sexual immorality. This was undeniably a convenient means through which the police were afforded legislative power to regulate not only the professional woman but also the amateur, who crucially was unable to be legally reprimanded under the solicitation laws as it relied on the prerequisite that a woman was known to be a common prostitute. In many ways, the path to and implementation of 40d symbolised the first instance in which the blurring of the professional and amateur in the social psyche mobilised legislative review and reform, a pattern which was to be repeated throughout the interwar period with various outcomes. It was also a vivid example of how the state were increasingly making attempts to legislate the sexual behaviour of young women, in



doing so carving out a symbiotic relationship between feminine sexuality and larger concerns surrounding national strength and power. The Armistice may have signalled peace in Europe, but, as we shall see, it by no means spelt the end of prostitution occupying a central position within political and public opprobrium.

### **(3:1)The path to the SOC**

As the war was drawing to a close in May of 1918, Lord Sandhurst presented to the House of Lords “a Second Reading to a Bill to amend the Criminal Law Amendment Acts, 1885 to 1912, and to re-enact with amendments the Indecent Advertisements Act, 1889, and Section 2 of the Venereal Diseases Act, 1917,” (the first reading of which had taken place a month earlier) (*HoL Debates*, vol. 29, 7 May 1918, col. 952). Four years earlier, the Bishop of London had also introduced a CLA Bill to the House, in which he made four proposals for legislative change:

- (1) To make it an offence to commit an act of indecency with a girl of sixteen whether she consented or not; at present consent is a good defence for an indecent assault if the girl is thirteen or over;
- (2) To make carnal knowledge of a girl under 18 a criminal offence; this generally is described as raising the age from sixteen to eighteen;
- (3) To abolish the defence that a man, having defiled a girl under age, had reason to believe that she was of the age or over it;
- (4) To extend from six months to twelve months the time within which proceedings could be taken against a man charged with an offence (*HoL Debates*, vol. 29, 7 May 1918, cols. 953-954).

Although the Bishop of London eventually withdrew his Bill, what had unfolded over the intervening period by way of escalating anxieties over the spread of venereal disease and the role of the amateur, and a general belief that there had been “some lowering of the standard of public morality” during the war, was clearly for Lord Sandhurst – and many of his colleagues in the House of Lords and to a lesser degree the House of Commons – evidence that such legislative amendments were now “an urgent war measure” (*ibid*: col. 961). In fact, just over a year earlier a

CLA Bill with similar provisions had been forwarded, and whilst it failed to secure legislative change, the frequency with which such petitions for amendment were emerging from Parliament was surely a testament to the way in which the war had served to push prostitution, and feminine sexuality more broadly – to the fore of the political agenda.

Sandhurst forwarded seven clauses, the first five of which had the potential to dramatically alter the ways in which prostitution and the prostitute were legally dealt with. Clause 1 and 2 - which closely emulated the Bishop's Clauses 1,2 and 4 - were concerned with strengthening the legislative protection of those under the age of sixteen by both abolishing "the plea of defence that a person under sixteen consented to the act complained of," and withdrawing as a defence "the reasonable cause of belief that the age was sixteen or over" (the second clause also proposed to extend the maximum penalty for those found guilty under this charge from six months imprisonment to twelve months) (ibid: col. 954). Sandhurst's Bill, however, did not advocate the raising of the age of consent, an omission he had based upon the advice of the Home Secretary who had informed him that "if it were inserted you could hardly escape from inserting the defence that a man had reasonable cause to believe that a person was of the age or over the age" and that "it is difficult to get convictions where the age is sixteen, to say nothing of seventeen or eighteen" (ibid: col. 954). Clause 3, was particularly interesting, with Sandhurst advocating the enactment of legislation that said "where a girl is convicted before any Court of being a common prostitute, of loitering and importuning for purposes of prostitution and solicitation, such a girl under eighteen may, until the age of nineteen, be detained in a home in lieu of punishment" (ibid: col. 954). For Sandhurst, this proposal was "by way of protection," a practical response which sought to shield young women from "the evil influences of their homes" and the fellow inmates they would encounter if referred by the courts to prison (ibid: col. 955). Clause 4 was concerned with raising both the rates of pecuniary fines and length of prison sentences issued against individuals involved in the managing and assisting of brothels as set out in the CLA of 1885. The existing penalties were set at £20 or three months imprisonment for a first offence, and £40 or four months imprisonment for a second offence. Sandhurst argued that given how "the trade is a very lucrative one" such "small does, if not laughed at, are not heeded, and we have been told that in their organisations

[brothels] provision is made in the accounts to treat these as working expenses” (ibid: col. 957). He proposed raising these penalties quite considerably to “£100 or three months imprisonment for a first offence, £250 or imprisonment with or without hard labour for six months for a second offence,” and/or “in any such case both fine and imprisonment” (ibid: col. 957). Clause 5 sought to bring legislative permanency to the temporary wartime provisions used to deal with the spread of venereal disease. It proposed making “it a criminal offence for a person so suffering from disease in a communicable form to have sexual intercourse with any other person, or to solicit or invite any other person to act with him or her” (ibid: col. 957). Moreover, persons suspected of spreading venereal disease would be liable to a “medical examination by the person’s own doctor or a prison doctor” (ibid: col. 957). In spite of the stance taken in 1916 by the Royal Commission which stated that the regulating of venereal disease was not a matter for criminal law, Sandhurst’s Bill proposed “to cope with the evil” by making it a criminal offence (ibid: col. 957).

Concurrently, in the Spring of 1918 Lord Beauchamp had introduced his Sexual Offences Bill to the HoL. With striking similarities to Sandhurst’s CLA Bill, the proposals of the SOB were another instance of the increasingly interventionist role the government were playing (or seeking to play) in matters of individual sexuality. And, just like the CLA Bill, the SOB Bill used the pretext of extended protection (i.e. for young girls against the sexual advances of men, for the public at large against the spread of venereal disease) in order to rationalise and legitimise this movement towards greater control over the nation’s sexual morality. Where the SOB Bill differed was in its call to raise the age of consent from sixteen (as it currently stood) to seventeen. It also proposed to raise the penalties issued against women for the offence of solicitation, although it did not include a provision which advocated the detention of girls under 18 found guilty of street prostitution offences within a reformatory setting. By the early summer of 1918, a Select Committee (composed of six members from the House of Lords and six members from the House of Commons) was created “to consider the Criminal Law Amendment Bill and the Sexual Offences Bill,” with the anticipation that, where appropriate, particular clauses from these two separate bills could be revised and subsequently consolidated into one legislative enactment (*Cmd.* 142/1918).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This led to the establishment of the Joint Select Committee on the Criminal Law Amendment Bill and

On the 6<sup>th</sup> August 1918, the Joint Select Committee on the Criminal Law Amendment Bill and Sexual Offences Bill met for the first time. It was however, as Swanwick has noted, a Committee which was both slow to get off the ground – “it was not until 15 October that it began to take evidence” – and one which was ultimately cut short by the General Election in the December (Swanick 2001: 213; *Cmd. 222/1920*). Whilst no legislative amendments surfaced in this instance, the proposed clauses for change and the consequent debates they ignited testified to how politically central feminine sexuality and prostitution were at this moment, to how far the figure of the amateur had begun to saturate legal discourses, and more importantly, the discordant and competing stances adopted by those who presented evidence to Committee and beyond. For example, the proposal to raise the age of consent was fervently welcomed by social purists and feminists such as Dr. Wilson (who presented her evidence as an independent witness rather than on behalf of the AMSH ) and Mrs. Gordon, the President of the National Union of Women Workers of Great Britain and Ireland (*Cmd. 142/1918*: 49-56; *ibid*: 57-65) . In fact, Wilson and Gordon both advocated that the age of consent should be extended to 18 years of age, for as Gordon argued, “... no girl under that age ought to be regarded as personally the one at fault; that she should be looked upon more or less as a ward of the whole community, and that her consent should not be looked upon as legal consent or as meeting the legal requirements until she is of a certain age” (*ibid*: 58). However, as Bland has observed, in raising the age of consent there were “implications for the control of the young ‘amateurs’” (Bland 1982: 382). After all, in this climate where - as the evidence presented over the course of the Committee itself drew attention to – the amateur was positioned as a figure of particular concern, raising the age of consent was not just about extending the net of protection but also the net of control. Indeed, statements such as, “amateur prostitution has increased,” “probably 72 to 75 per cent. of venereal disease comes from the amateur,” and “the amateur really prevails much more largely nowadays than does what is called in the Acts the common prostitute,” were fairly typical of the views forwarded by the witnesses (*Cmd. 142/1918*: 12; *ibid*: 21; *ibid*: 34).

Another area which received support was that of rewording the existing laws so as to make them 'equal as between the sexes.' The promoters of the SOB in particular, had emphatically stated when it was first introduced to the HoL that they would "try in every way that they could to make legislation equal" (ibid: 22). As we have seen, the implementation of 40d served to focus objections upon the way in which the law operated to target women without regarding "what is the faulty conduct on the part of men" (ibid: 22). Yet, such objections had predated 40d, and whilst witnesses such as Mrs. Gotto, the representative from the National Council for Combating Venereal Diseases, argued that "as far as it can be done the law should be made absolutely equal between the sexes," others such as Mrs. Gordon took the view that the proposals of the Committee did not go far enough because here a move towards sexual equality was only proposed in relation to laws dealing with venereal disease (ibid: 74; ibid: 59). Gordon informed the Committee how the NUWW have, "time and again publicly and unanimously passed resolutions urging that an equal moral standard for men and women should be required in society and in law" (ibid: 61). She went on to voice her opposition to the fact that the current solicitation laws were not applicable to men, although this area did not fall under the remit of the Committee; "importuning should be dealt with equally between the sexes that the same treatment should be dealt out to men; it should be done on an absolutely equal basis" (ibid: 63). Given that the proposed clauses for incorporating a permanent legislative measure to deal with the spread of venereal diseases (clause 1 under the SOB and clause 5 under the CLA Bill) were, along with clause 3 of the CLA Bill (the measure to compulsory detain young women under the age of 18 charged with prostitution offences within a reformatory institution) the most consistently opposed and contentious clauses of the Bill's, talk of reconciling some semblance of sexual equality within the law was something of a dead letter.

In November 1918 the Committee decided that "owing to the imminent Dissolution of Parliament" the inquiry would not be completed and their report would only present the minutes of evidence presented to them rather than making any recommendations (ibid: iv). In such a way, it is difficult – if not impossible – to prophesise the route the Committee would have taken going forward, of knowing whether and which of their original clauses would have been reworked in the light of the evidence presented before them, or abandoned all together. Little did they know in late

1918 that it would be less than two years before their proposals would reach Committee level once again.

In the summer of 1920, Sandhurst's CLA Bill and Beauchamp's SOB were considered again by a Joint Select Committee of the HoL and the HoC. This time, however, the Bishop of London's CLA Bill was also incorporated into the proceedings, and on 30<sup>th</sup> November 1920 the Committee published its Report (*Cmd. 222/1920*). Based upon the evidence presented over several months by witnesses (many of whom had also presented evidence in Autumn of 1918) the Committee concluded that "it is not desirable that they [Beauchamp's SOB and the Bishop of London's CLA Bill] should become law in their present form" (*ibid*: v). They did, however, back every clause of Sandhurst's CLA Bill after making a few slight adjustments. Even Clause 5 (the proposal to make the communication of Venereal Disease a matter for criminal law) which had proved as equally contentious in 1920 as it had throughout the war was supported after much "anxious consideration" (*ibid*: v). In the end, the CLA Act of 1922 only included Clauses 1, 2 and 4 of Sandhurst's Bill, and whilst for social purity and feminist organisations such as the NUWW and the AMSH some ground had been made in relation to the protection of young women, the rejection of Beauchamp's and the Bishop of London's respective Bills earlier on in 1920 meant that they lost out on securing a move towards greater sexual equality within the criminal law and the raising of the age of consent. Perhaps unsurprisingly, following this series of disappointments social purity and feminist organisations stepped up their campaigns from the early 1920s, with the view that if legislative change could not be secured from Parliament initiated drives then perhaps outside lobbying could be more effective.

Since the nineteenth century, objections had been forwarded from various quarters with regards to the loaded sexual double standard which pervaded the solicitation laws. Josephine Butler's campaign against the C.D. Acts utilised the sexual double standard – in which it was suspected prostitutes who were subjected to invasive medical inspection and internment – to argue that the Acts were breaching the civil liberty of women, whilst men who frequented prostitutes were literally and symbolically untouchable. In the aftermath of the Great War, it was the AMSH

who were at the forefront of this crusade against sexual injustice, only this time their attention was focused upon the more enduring solicitation laws. After several unsuccessful attempts at lobbying for a Royal Commission into prostitution, and escalating concerns over the route Parliament were taking with regards to prostitution and feminine sexuality more broadly (as laid bare in the CLA Bill and SOB of 1918), the AMSH took it upon themselves to conduct their own inquiry in 1919, which drew on a similar range of expert evidence as the CLA Bill and SOB, and later on the SOC. In 1920, the published report, *The State and Sexual Morality*, argued that both the language in which the solicitation laws were framed and the way in which they were implemented operated to unfairly target women; “the man and woman in these, as in all matters, should be placed on exactly the same footing” (AMSH 1920: 7). Concern was also voiced against the increasing interest the government were taking in matters of private sexuality, and the seemingly narrowing conduit between prostitution and other forms of feminine sexuality; “It is not the function of the State to attempt to interfere in the case of adult persons with their sexual relations, which should be a matter of individual conscience, and with which the community is not concerned, unless their conduct involves some act of public indecency” (ibid: 9).

Following their disappointments after the implementation of the CLA Act in July of 1922 (and more precisely the omitted clauses), the AMSH’s campaign picked up momentum, and by October they had produced a further pamphlet. *The Need for Repealing the Present Solicitation Laws*, focused upon three particular grievances. Firstly, the AMSH argued that there was a growing tendency nowadays for magistrates to “consider police evidence alone to be sufficient proof of annoyance,” as oppose to requiring that the person solicited should appear in court as complainant (Johnson 1922). Given that the law only made prostitution an offence when a woman loitering or soliciting as a prostitute caused annoyance to passengers, this reliance upon police evidence was understood to be iniquitous in the sense that the police constable acted as both the interpreter of annoyance and the representative on behalf of the unknown person or persons he had deemed to have been ‘annoyed’. Secondly, the inclusion of the term ‘common prostitute’ was seen to stigmatise women and influence a police constable’s decision to make an arrest given that invariably to be recognised as a ‘common prostitute’ was to be known to have previous prostitution

convictions. Thirdly, the AMSH argued that “the law should be just and equal” and that men and women “should be placed on exactly the same footing” (ibid). They contended that many women charged with prostitution “feel the injustice of their having to bear the penalty, when the man who was morally a partner in their offence goes entirely free; for in many cases a woman only solicits when she sees that the man is looking out for it” (ibid). Similarly, the AMSH objected to the fact that there was no equivalent provision to deal with cases where men were soliciting women, and thus the proposed remedy was to repeal all gender specific terminology within the existing laws. The AMSH boldly presented their conclusions in the form of a draft Bill, and suggested that their proposals for legislative change should be cited as the Street Order Act, 1923. However, as Slater has noted, it was under the Public Places (Order) Bill that the AMSH’s recommendations finally gained parliamentary attention, when Conservative M.P. Nancy Astor – the first female M.P. in the HoC – became the figurehead for their campaign and introduced the PPOB to the HoC in July 1925 (see Slater 2007: 40-47). Consisting of three clauses, “the objects of this Bill” were:

- (1) To repeal provisions in the existing law which refer to solicitation by common prostitutes, and other provisions which do not explicitly refer to solicitation but are sometimes used for dealing with such conduct;
- (2) To substitute a simple provision, which substantially covers the same ground as the existing law, but applies to all persons alike;
- (3) To enact that proceedings shall only be taken on complaint by or on behalf of the party aggrieved (*Cmd.* 212/1924-25).

In the words of the Home Office, “this Bill made no progress whatsoever,” although it did reach the level of the HoL when it was introduced in November 1926 by Lord Balfour of Burleigh (TNA HO45/12663/1922-27). Yet, the AMSH were by no means alone in their lobbying. In early 1923, no less than 24 women’s societies (including the AMSH, as well as the Catholic Women’s League, the National Council of Women, and the Union of Jewish Women), sent a resolution to the Home Secretary directing his attention to the fact that, “...some 6,000 women are convicted every year of soliciting to the annoyance of passengers without any person or persons alleged to be



annoyed coming forward to give evidence ”(TNA HO45/12663/1923). With the purpose of provoking some form of legislative review, they asked the Home Secretary “what steps he proposes to take to ensure that the law with regard to solicitation and annoyance may be equal between men and women both in the letter and in its administration” (ibid:1923). After considering the “present methods of dealing with offenders proved guilty repeatedly,” in June 1925 the Probation and Treatment of Offenders Committee of The Magistrates’ Association requested “that a Departmental Committee of Inquiry should be appointed to inquire into the Solicitation Laws and their administration” (ibid:1925). The British Social Hygiene Council argued that the existing laws were working to contribute “to the dissemination of venereal disease and that the present conditions tend to encourage promiscuity,” thus calling for a Departmental Committee of Inquiry (ibid:1925). The London Council for the Promotion of Public Morality pushed for a Joint Committee of Inquiry, and proposed that the law should be altered to obtain “equal responsibility for men and women,” that more women police should be attested, and that there should be “longer (or indeterminate) terms of imprisonment” for hardened offenders (ibid:1925). Interestingly, they objected to any amendments which would prevent police evidence alone being sufficient enough in the securing of convictions. Many other organisations took similar stances to those noted above however there were some who opposed any form of legislative review and objected to the suggestions for amendment which were emerging. For example, whilst The Associated Societies for the Care of Women and Children stated that “the existing laws were archaic,” they did not agree with Lady Astor’s PPOB, arguing that it “would bring back the old days of aggressive accosting” (ibid:1925). The Church Army also rejected the PPOB, claiming that it “would be most damaging to their efforts to purify the streets” (ibid:1925). The NVA took issue with any “unnecessary” move which could potentially culminate in alterations in the law. For the NVA the existing law was “in the main admirably adapted for the purpose for which it was designed,” they did not agree that the law was unfair to women, and were concerned that it “might be harmful” if review led to “the substitution of an unworkable law for the present elastic and workable law” (ibid:1925). The picture emerging, therefore, is one where momentum for review was strong and widespread, but was constantly mediated and even hampered by a lack of consensus regarding how reform might look, how it should be obtained and whether it should be sought at all. For some, change was about securing a greater level of protection for

prostitutes and a greater sense of legislative equality. For others, legislative change was about strengthening the law in order to gain more effective powers to deal with particular forms of prostitution, namely habitual prostitution. Indeed, even within organisations competing ideals were abundant. For example, the standpoint of the National Vigilance Association for Scotland departed from that of their colleagues in London, with them arguing “in favour of a Committee of Inquiry” (ibid: 1925). As we shall see from the evidence presented to the SOC, divided views, vested interests and discordant recommendations continued to prevail even after legislative review had been secured. And, it was these very points of contention forwarded by the lobbyists – the problem of relying solely upon police evidence, the sexual double standard of the law, the use of the term ‘common prostitute’ and the effectiveness of the current penalties – which framed the main discussions of the SOC proceedings.

It would be misleading, however, to suggest that the SOC was established purely in response to political lobbying, nor that it was the only review into the policing of prostitution during the period. A series of high-profile policing scandals reported in the national press in the 1920s served to focus public attention upon the ways in which matters of public sexual immorality were legislatively handled, most notably the Fitzroy case of 1922, the Goddard scandal of 1928 and the Savidge/Money affair also of 1928 (see, Slater 2007a). On the 22<sup>nd</sup> August 1928 a Royal Commission on Police Powers and Procedure (RCPPP) was appointed, with the aim;

“to inquire into the practice followed in interrogating, or taking statements from, persons interviewed in the course of the investigation of crime; and to report whether, in our opinion, such powers and duties are properly exercised and discharged, with due regard to the rights and liberties of the subject, the interests of justice, and the observance of the Judge’s Rules both in the letter and the spirit; and to make any recommendations necessary in respect of such powers and duties and their proper exercise and discharge ...” (*Cmd. 3297/1929: 1*).

Although the focus of the RCPPT was far more generic than that of the SOC, many of their discussions did overlap, whilst both investigations made periodic references to one another. As

illuminated above, in 1920s Britain it was not only acts of sexual immorality which could cause public offence but the laws, their execution and their executioners could also be deemed to be publically offensive. Foucauldian rooted theory which has understood the function of sexual morality related legislation not just as repressive mechanisms of control but, for example, as Cook has recently contended "... a powerful discourse which shaped understandings of sex and desire," and "helped to propagate a series of apparently incontestable 'norms' and encouraged people to internalise them," appears somewhat irreconcilable in this context (Cook 2006: 65). As we have seen, a catalogue of grievances surfaced from the public and political domains in response to the regulation of sexual morality at this time, ranging from accusations of police complicity to heavy-handedness, and from a gender-bias judicial system to a class-bias one. If the law operates at a level which is, as Mort has argued, "positively educative" - in the sense that it defines and redefines the boundaries of normative and subordinate sexual behaviours - then it is contended that in the context of interwar Britain for some observers the absorption of such notions was resisted whilst acquiring a sense of what was 'right' and 'wrong' could be just as applicable to the laws used to deal with sexual immorality as to the acts themselves (Mort 1987: 104). The declining criminal statistics for prostitution-related offences did little to dampen momentum for legislative review nor curtail broader anxieties regarding the existence of prostitution because decline was frequently understood to denote little more than the move towards police inertia and judicial reluctance to convict which followed such scandals, and thus was a ruse for both the real scale of prostitution on the streets whilst glossing over the inherent problems concerning the very laws and their execution which had led this condition of artificial decline in the first instance. It was in this climate that the SOC and the RCPMP were established. By the end of the 1920s anticipations that amendments in the laws and procedures used to deal with prostitution would finally be realised were at an all time high.

### **(3:2)The establishment of the SOC**

On 14<sup>th</sup> October 1927, Stanley Baldwin's Conservative government ordered a departmental inquiry into the state of British street prostitution under the current solicitation laws. Overseen by the Secretary of State - Sir William Joynson-Hicks - the Street Offences Committee (SOC) was to;

“enquire into the law and practice regarding offences against the criminal law in connection with prostitution and solicitation for immoral purposes in streets and public places and other offences against decency and good order, and to report what changes, if any, are in their opinion desirable” (*Cmd.* 3231/1928).

The Committee was comprised of fifteen members – ten males and five females – all of whom well-known dignitaries, ranging from the Bishop of Durham, to prominent magistrates, lawyers, civil servants and academics. Even Joynson-Hicks' wife sat on the Committee. The inquiry followed a forum-styled procedure, in which over an eighteen day period various witnesses from across the country were invited to present relevant evidence to the Committee, alongside written statements submitted by those unable to attend in person. Government officials, magistrates, probation officers, police representatives, social workers and social purity organisations, were amongst those who made contributions. Together, the Committee deemed these witnesses sufficient to typify “a widely representative selection from among persons qualified by actual experience to provide us not only with information but with comment based on practical contact with the question at issue” (*ibid*). Within days of its introduction, however, a series of objections were levelled against the suitability of the Committee members. For example, Sir James Marchant the director of the Council of Public Morals argued that the panel was “too academic with the legal side too heavily represented” (*DM*, 17 October 1927). He was particularly surprised at the fact that Mrs. Bramwell Booth of the Salvation Army, whom he described as someone “who knows more of this subject than any member of the committee,” was not asked to sit on the panel. Other objections focused upon the age of the members, which averaging at “about sixty” was deemed “far too high” (*ibid*). Nevertheless, the SOC quickly got underway, and in November 1928 the *Report of the Street Offences Committee* was submitted to the Secretary of State.

In total eighty-five statements of evidence were submitted to the SOC during 1927 and 1928, four of which came from Liverpool. The witnesses from Liverpool were; Mr. Deacon the SM Liverpool, Mr. Everett the CC of LCPF, Miss. Potter the patrol lead of the LWPP, and Miss. Bathe a former worker for the Liverpool Preventive and Rescue Association (LPRA). Whilst evidence

statements were not restricted by any pre-arranged format set out by the SOC, representatives were required to cover particular areas, including; capacity in which prostitution was encountered within profession, methods of solicitation observed, opinion regarding effectiveness of existing solicitation laws, and recommendations for legislative amendments. All four of Liverpool's representatives submitted written statements to the SOC, but it was only Deacon and Everett who were called to present further evidence in person to the committee in the January of 1928. A brief look at the index of witnesses documented within the SOC's administrative records would suggest that in comparison to other provincial areas of similar sizes, Liverpool featured fairly prominently within the proceedings in terms of the number and the range of representatives. To say that this was a reflection upon the scale of the prostitution problem in the city would be a fairly crude assumption, but it is contended that together these representatives and their organisations signified the complex landscape of prostitution control which was in operation in early twentieth century Liverpool (as explored in section three). If, as we have seen, the campaigns for legislative review unfolded along discordant lines, then the evidence emerging from Liverpool suggests that divided views, vested interests and conflicted anticipations were also at play in the local context.

### **(3:3) The law and its execution in Liverpool**

In interwar Liverpool – as was the case nationally – the act of prostitution itself was not illegal. Yet, a myriad of national and local legislative provisions existed whereby the criminality of the prostitute could be, and was, constructed in relation to the perceived impact her presence had upon hegemonic society. On paper, this was a distinction that the LCPF were careful to recognise within their renowned *Instruction Book* penned by former CC of the LCPF and now Inspector of Constabulary, Sir Leonard Dunning:

“A common prostitute is a woman who gets her living wholly or in part by having carnal connection with any man who pays her. Doing so is in itself not an unlawful act, and its immorality does not affect the duties of the police” (MPA LCPF/Instructions/1926).

In reality, the range of legislative powers available to the LCPF not only effectively overrode the official mantra of legality, but could work to constrain and chastise prostitutes far more frequently

and severely than figures who were legally defined as criminals. Ultimately, the prostitute's criminality was contingent upon not what she did but where and how she did it. So, as the instructions went on to articulate:

“But, if a woman prostitutes herself in the street, or frequents the streets for the purpose of soliciting men for prostitution, she is a source of annoyance and shame to respectable people and is guilty of a breach of public order” (ibid: 1926).

Unlike areas which had fallen under the jurisdiction of the C.D. Acts, by the interwar period Liverpool had retained a largely autonomous and continuous system of prostitution legislation for almost a century. National statutes sat alongside local bye-laws ensuring that every aspect of street solicitation was regulated, and that crucially the LCPF were equipped with the legislative power to control the *potential* as well as *actual* transgression of prostitutes. The longest-serving provision was that under Section 3 of the Vagrancy Act, 1824, which was used in cases where an actual act of indecency or breach of public order had taken place and read as follows:

“for being a common prostitute wandering and behaving in a riotous manner in ... Street” (Vagrancy Act, 1824, sec. 3, 5 Geo. IV, c. 83).

The term ‘riotous manner’ could refer to anything from “using filthy language”, “laying hands indecently on a man whom she solicits”, “provoking disorder by the way in which she offers herself to prostitution”, or “exposing her person” (MPA LCPF/Instructions/1926). If a woman was “caught in the act of carnal connection,” then typically the charge recorded in the court register would make reference to this in the following way:

“for being a common prostitute wandering and behaving in an indecent manner by having carnal connections in ... Street” (LRO 347/MAG/2/1904-1969).

In principle, the Vagrancy Act was understood to be fairly unproblematic for the LCPF – “such cases offer no difficulty” – because the inappropriate behaviour of the woman had been enacted rather than implied, and the clear specifications of the law as detailed in the *Instruction Book* meant that arrest relied very little upon the interpretation of conduct (MPA LCPF/Instructions/1926). Interestingly, however, – as I later detail - when these cases were heard in court the custodial sentences issued to offenders indicated a degree of irreverence to the law by magistrates who consistently ignored the maximum sentencing period set at “any time not exceeding one calendar month” (Vagrancy Act, 1824, sec. 3, 5 Geo. IV, c. 83). But this Act was very rarely used. In 1926, for example, just 8% of arrests for solicitation were made in connection to the Vagrancy Act, perhaps an indication that prostitutes were neither overtly boisterous in their solicitation nor likely to use the streets as a space in which to fulfil sexual transactions; at least not when the police were on patrol.<sup>2</sup>

By contrast, the other provision available to deal with solicitation in the streets – the Towns Police Clauses Act, 1847 – proved to be more operational, yet potentially more problematic. This was the measure to be applied in instances where a common prostitute was deemed to persistently accost, annoy and/ or obstruct members of the public in the process of soliciting, and read as follows:

“being a common prostitute loitering and importuning passengers for the purpose of prostitution in ... Street” (Town Police Clauses Act, 1847, sec. 28, 10 & 11 Victoria, c.89).

Prior to 1921, the Liverpool Improvement Act of 1842 had been used to deal with such cases. Following the enactment of the Liverpool Corporation Act (1921) – a move which sought to consolidate local statutes – the LIA was repealed, although crucially the LCA “did not re-enact any similar clause” to deal with common prostitutes soliciting (TNA HO 326/8/26/1927-28; Liverpool Corporation Act, 1921, sec. 416, 11 & 12, Geo. V, c. 74). Thus, from 1921 Section 28 of the TPCA

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<sup>2</sup> This statistic has been determined by locating every entry in the Police Court Registers relating to arrests made in connection to ‘common prostitution’ for the year 1926, and then determining which exact provision was used in each of these cases, i.e. the VA or the TPCA. For 1926, it was possible to locate 382 out of 407 cases of common prostitution officially recorded in the criminal statistical returns for this year, and therefore this statistic is a proportion of the located cases (382) rather than the official statistical return (407).

was used to fill this void, and statistically was the most exercised of the two solicitation provisions functioning in Liverpool during the interwar period. In 1926, for example, 92% of arrests for solicitation were made in connection to the TPCA.<sup>3</sup> Unlike the VA which required the constable to have witnessed a specific breach of public disorder, the TPCA could be used more laterally and in most cases - given the reluctance of the public to instigate and/or pursue a complaint of solicitation (a point I return to later) - relied upon police interpretation and inference of irritation to the public. Exercising the TPCA was, however, clearly something of a double-edged sword for the LCPF. On one hand this provision granted the police a degree of latitude to conveniently determine and then control the potential transgression of the prostitute, and certainly the statistical usage suggests that it was an indispensable tool in “ridding the streets of this nuisance” (MPA LCPF/Instructions/1926). On the other, as Emsley has observed, the reliance upon police discretion propagated by the imprecision of the written law could quickly descend into “opportunities for corruption”, or at least arbitrary and erroneous policing on the ground, a factor which left forces such as the LCPF particularly susceptible to accusations of heavy-handedness at this juncture given the exposure the policing of morality had received as a result of high-profile scandals such as those explored above and the prominence of the SOC and RCPPP inquiries (Emsley 2009: 218).

Under both the VA and the TPCA there was the ubiquitous problem of identifying and charging a woman as a ‘common prostitute’. The *Instruction Book* suggested erring on the side of caution, “because the accusation of being a common prostitute is a serious one, and if wrongly made may inflict great injury upon an honest woman” (MPA LCPF/Instructions/1926). In cases where the police constable was not entirely confident that the subject had previous convictions as a common prostitute it was advised to charge her under one of the many other more general public disorder acts (ibid). What was not documented but would have undoubtedly troubled the LCPF was the injury such wrongful arrests could – and did – have upon the reputation of their organisation. Both Potter and Bathe advocated that the term ‘common prostitute’ “be deleted” from “the general and local statutes” (TNA HO 326/8/56/1927-28). For Potter and the LWPP this parlance served to stigmatise women, leading to a culture of “social displacement” whereby a “barrier” was set up

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<sup>3</sup> Again, this statistic is a proportion of the located cases (382) rather than the official statistical return (407) for 1926.



“between the women so classified and her return to normal life” (ibid). For Bathe, her interactions with Liverpool’s prostitutes over a number of years had revealed that “amongst them” there was “a great sense of injustice with regard to the administration of existing street laws” (TNA HO 326/8/60/1927-28). They had told her how they were frequently arrested “not for the actual offence of disorderly conduct or solicitation, but because they were known to be prostitutes” (ibid). In turn, this impacted upon their everyday movements and their social interactions; “if they wished to be in the City to attend a place of amusement for their own business or pleasure, they ran the risk of arrest” (ibid). In this sense, there are parallels to be made between the statutory use of the term ‘common prostitute’ in interwar Britain and the observations Levine has made in relation to Victorian and Edwardian social commentaries of prostitution, where she contends that “the prostitute, literally and metaphorically in this literature, becomes her body, that which Foucault would represent as one of the prime targets for the exercise of power in the modern world” (Levine 1993: 267). Evidently, this conceptualisation of the prostitute woman as indistinguishable from her trade was not just endemic to discourses of prostitution. Indeed, after considering the “voluminous” amount of evidence presented to them, the SOC concluded in their final recommendations, that there should be an “elimination of the expression ‘common prostitute’” (*Cmd.* 3231/1928). Whilst they were not convinced that the term worked to “prejudice the merits of the case” against individuals charged with soliciting, they took the stance that the act of ‘importuning’ was “the same whether the person who importunes is or is not a prostitute,” and thus called for a more general law which made no “specific references to either the character or the sex of the offender” (ibid).

The standpoint adopted by the Liverpool’s judicial representatives was somewhat different. Whilst, for example, Deacon told the SOC, “one would like, if possible, that the provisions of such an Act should be framed without bringing in the words ‘common prostitute’,” he argued how given “the fact that members of the public will not, and hardly can be expected, to come forward to prove that they were directly solicited or importuned,” the framing of “such provisions without these words appears to me to be almost insuperable” (TNA HO 326/8/26/1927-28). When questioned by the SOC over this matter, Everett took a similar line to Deacon, inferring that knowing a woman to be a ‘common prostitute’ was frequently deemed to be in itself a sufficient basis upon which to

make an arrest in the absence of a willing or even identified complainant coming forward. He recited the directives outlined in Dunning's Instruction Book, which said, "if you know that she has been already convicted as a prostitute, or if the man solicited will come to Court to prove them, you must arrest her" (MPA LCPF/Instructions/1926). For Liverpool's judicial leaders, then, the use of the term 'common prostitute' was fundamental to both making arrests and securing convictions, granting them the latitude to circumnavigate the perpetual problems involved in obtaining corroborative evidence.

This leads into another key concern relating to the policing and judging of prostitutes. The legitimacy of convicting a woman based solely upon the evidence of the police was, as we have seen, a serious point of contention, and one which received considerable attention within the proceedings of the SOC and the RCPPP. In spite of the official mantra which stated that a police constable needed to "be able to satisfy us [the magistrates] that her conduct had actually been resented," in reality this meant little more than a police constable appearing in court and relaying satisfactorily what he had observed (TNA HO/326/7/9/1928). The issue here was that a police constable had the power to firstly infer annoyance had occurred and then to stand in court and testify to that annoyance on behalf of an unknown member – or members – of the public. Aside from the interpretative issues involved in deciphering what exactly constituted annoyance, concerns were levelled against the inherent prejudice involved in court cases where a woman known to be a common prostitute – and thus known to have previous convictions for this offence – had to defend herself in response to the accusations of the policeman. As the SOC pointed out to Deacon:

"... the evidence of a policeman, a man of good character who knows the requirements of the law, who has committed himself to making the arrest, on the one hand, and the evidence of the prostitute, a woman of bad character ... it is almost inevitable that the magistrate will be affected...?" (ibid).

Deacon and Everett both agreed that "to some extent, there is a loading of the dice" with regards to this procedure (ibid). Indeed, the periodic spotlight which shone on Liverpool's prostitution policies by way of the SOC and RCPPP revealed a CJS which was both highly

conscious of its potential misgivings and nervous of provoking public disquiet and state criticism. Yet, ultimately, as this chapter (together with chapter five) goes on to demonstrate, these were risks the official regulators were willing to take and flaws they were prepared to submit to in order to maintain a pragmatic and viable system; after all this was a city working hard to loosen ties with its Victorian past. Put simply, the quandary was, how else were convictions to be secured given that as Everett noted, complainants “very often” refused to provide the constable with a name and address let alone “come forward as witnesses” in court (TNA HO/326/8/27/1927-28). Interestingly, this procedural difficulty was highlighted in Mike Brogden’s oral history of beat policing in interwar Liverpool, with former constable S.H. recalling how:

“When I saw one, I’d go up to the fellow she had accosted and say, ‘Excuse me, can you tell me what that lady said to you?’ ‘You must be – I don’t want to be brought into it.’ Or, ‘She asked me if I wanted a short time.’ ‘Would you care to give me your name and address?’ ‘No, I’m not interested – I don’t want to go to court. ‘So that was that, and some said, ‘Yes, I’ll go to court.’ But a lot of them didn’t want to be mixed up with prostitutes” (Brogden 1991: 132).

Yet, the practice of prosecuting prostitutes based solely upon police evidence was nothing new in Liverpool. Back in the late nineteenth century, CC Nott-Bower had answered to critics who had accused him and his force of taking a laissez-faire approach to the regulation of prostitution by openly stating how Liverpool’s Stipendiary Magistrate was “probably almost the only one” who was willing to flex the particulars of the written law in this respect (Nott-Bower 1926: 143). By the interwar period, Liverpool was certainly not alone in veering towards the thin edge of the law. Even the RCPMP, the inquiry prompted by concerns over heavy-handed policing, the use of the ‘third degree’ and a class-biased legal system, endorsed the line of action taken in Liverpool in relation to prostitutes appearing in court: “Members of the public are found in practice to be extremely reluctant to give evidence in these cases. The result is that the law creating these offences would be almost a dead letter if cases were not decided on Police evidence alone” (*Cmd.* 3297/1929: 120). The SOC were less palpable in their conclusions on this matter. Whilst they rejected suggestions made to them which had called for a rule to be instated preventing police evidence alone from being sufficient to “justify conviction of a solicitation offence,” they did

regard it as desirable “that wherever possible corroboration should be obtained from members of the public” (*Cmd.* 3231/1928).

But if the laws used to deal with common prostitutes were, as Slater has noted, liable to political and public accusations of police opprobrium, then the law used in interwar Liverpool to deal with solicitation by ‘unknown’ women was surely at the thinnest end of the wedge (Slater 2007a: 41). Interestingly, it was a vague local statute known as the Liverpool Corporation Act of 1921 which enabled the LCPF to circumnavigate the limits of the national laws – which required the woman in question to be known as a ‘common prostitute’ – and in doing so forge a comprehensive system of legislative control over public feminine sexuality. Section 416 stated that:

“Every person shall be liable to a penalty not exceeding 40/- who in any street or place of public resort or recreation ground belonging to or under the control of the Corporation or any unfenced ground adjoining or abutting any street shall use any threatening, abusive or insulting words, or behave in a disorderly or offensive manner, with intent to provoke breach of the peace, or whereby a breach of the peace may be occasioned” (Liverpool Corporation Act, 1921, sec. 416, 11 & 12, Geo. V, c. 74).

The *Instruction Book* advised constables to make use of this legislation in instances where “you are unable to give evidence that the woman is a prostitute but there is evidence of soliciting” (MPA LCPF/Instructions/1944). In such cases the charge would be issued as “did behave in an offensive manner whereby a breach of the peace might have been occasioned” (TNA HO326/8/26/1927-28). A year prior to the implementation of the LCA, CC Caldwell had in his evidence to the CLA and SOB Select Committee voiced his frustrations at being unable to legislate against the “young girl who has not yet arrived at the stage” of common prostitution (*Cmd.* 222/1920: 180). He told them how “exceedingly difficult” it was to regulate such women, given that at present the police were only able to “deal with them by a caution time after time until we have a sufficient accumulation to prove that the girl is a common prostitute” (*ibid.*: 120). The provisions of the LCA certainly reconciled this void. However, it is clear that the LCA was also

exercised more laterally. The imprecision of the LCA was in many ways reminiscent of the indiscriminate nature of Regulation 40d, and although unlike 40d it may not have been constructed in response to amateur prostitution it certainly was seized upon as a convenient means to deal with this form of feminine sexual behaviour. Crucially, in his evidence to the SOC Everett resisted using the term ‘amateur’ to refer to those women dealt with under the LCA, instead categorising them as ‘women of questionable morality importuning’ and ‘unknown women soliciting’ (TNA HO/326/8/27/1927-28; TNA HO/326/7/10/1928). In his annual reports, however, Everett made the link between the LCA and the control of the amateur much more explicit, noting how this provision was used to deal with the class of street offenders who were:

“Irresponsible, careless, ill-mannered young women and girls whose self respect is lacking and who preen themselves for the purpose of attracting their contemporaries of the opposite sex, more for the sake of being treated to drink, refreshment, or entertainment than for actual immorality” (LRO H352/2/WAT/1928). Perhaps these discrepancies imply that Everett was well aware that the use of the LCA in relation to such behaviours represented a ‘step too far’ in the regulation of feminine sexual morality. In a climate where a premium was placed upon the correct and legitimate policing of women known to be prostitutes, advertising via a national inquiry the fact that women who were not known to be prostitutes and were not necessarily even engaging in acts of immorality were being legislatively dealt with would not have been a wise move. Interestingly, in spite of the fact the SOC were not privy to the full operational uses of the LCA, they did take issue with the fact that this statute appeared to be far harsher than the statutes used to deal with common prostitutes in the sense that it could be applied to persons who were understood to have the *intent* to “provoke breach of the peace” rather than necessarily doing so (the TPCA relied upon the witnessing of persistent annoyance and the VA of actual breach of the peace). If the execution of the TPCA and the VA was made in light of a retrospective knowledge of what a woman had previously done (i.e. dependent upon her classification as a common prostitute), then the LCA was particularly troubling because it was enacted on the presumption of both what she might do (i.e. the intent of her actions) and what she might become (i.e. a common prostitute). Indeed, the LWPP objected to the use of the LCA in such cases, arguing that the implications surrounding legislative

intervention were far more conducive to turning a young girl into a full-time prostitute rather than protecting and/or deterring her from it, a further example of what they termed “social displacement” (TNA HO 326/8/56/1927).

Attempts at quantifying the utilisation of the LCA in relation to solicitation by ‘unknown women’ is, however, inherently tricky. Firstly, it is important to note that such offences did not appear within the returns from Liverpool for prostitution offences, instead coming under the category of local byelaws. Thus, the prostitution statistics form only one part of the story, failing to denote how at the very time the LCPF were claiming marked improvement they were actually extending their legislative apparatus to cover a wider remit of sexual immorality. Secondly, proceedings taken against individuals under the LCA when presented in the annual reports were not broken down into specific offences, and thus gauging how many amateurs and/or unknown women were legally dealt with is problematic, though not impossible (as I demonstrate in chapter five). Conveniently, for the benefit of the SOC Everett calculated for the year 1927 how many cases falling under the LCA were specifically to do with solicitation by ‘unknown women.’ The results are compelling. In 1927, 411 amateurs/unknown women were arrested in Liverpool for solicitation, whilst just 336 professionals/common prostitutes were arrested for solicitation and/or actual indecency. Over the course of a few years the landscape of prostitution control, and seemingly the forms of prostitution itself, had altered significantly.

### **(3:4) Punishments and penalties: Opinions**

Whilst over the course of the SOC and the RCPPP local regulators and their regulatory policies were put in the spotlight – leaving them, as we have seen, particularly susceptible to moments of criticism – such enquiries also existed as a platform for those involved in the front-line of prostitution control at the local level to influence and inform legislative and procedural revisions at the national level. In this sense, the distribution of power did not follow a straightforward ‘top-down’ trajectory whereby legislative enactments and/or amendments were formed independently of the experiences and feedback of those who actually implemented and managed such laws on the ground. These transactions between the local and the state or institutional level provide a particularly useful insight into the logistics of prostitution control, and the often uneasy relationship

law enforcers had with the law. Objections to the solicitation laws, as we shall see, came from both regulator and regulated alike. In Liverpool, the CJS's responses to the solicitation laws formed an interesting dichotomy, whereby on the one hand the current legislative capabilities were understood to suitably and successfully deter young and new offenders from committing further prostitution misdemeanours, whilst on the other hand, the laws were seen to have little success or impact with regards to dealing with older and persistent offenders.

“Young beginners” – as Deacon referred to them – were believed to respond considerably well to early legislative interventions (TNA HO/326/8/26/1927-28). Typically, “in the case of a first offender” following arrest a woman would be remanded “on her own bail for seven days,” appearing before the police court (TNA HO/326/7/9/1928). During this intervening period, a Police Court Missionary (otherwise known as a probation officer) was asked to prepare a report on the woman - based upon an interview with her - which would then be presented to the court at the end of the remand period. Long before the passing of the Probation of the Offenders Act in 1907, Liverpool had had a well established “probationary system of its own” (*LDPM*, 16 August 1932). Traditionally, police court missionaries had worked independently of one another, representing particular religious and social purity organisations such as the Church of England Temperance Society, the Liverpool and County Police Courts Catholic Aid Society, and the Liverpool Ladies’ Temperance Association. Even after the P.O.A came into being and official probation officers were appointed under the Probation Committee, in Liverpool police court missionaries remained a constant presence in the police court, and by the interwar period represented newer organisations such as the JAPGW and the LWPP. Immortalised in *Punch* as “the poor man’s advocate,” the role of the missionary – or indeed the probation officer – was captured brilliantly in 1932 when the *Post and Mercury* interviewed Mr. Harry Goldstone, the chief probation of Liverpool (and earlier the Church of England police court missionary) upon his retirement after forty years of service (*LDPM*, 16 August 1932):

“He was able, in his earlier days at Liverpool, to appear before the magistrates, having had the opportunity to get hold of the prisoner’s point of view, and his, or her, history, and to bring out

a more complete story than might otherwise have been told. In spite of the sympathetic efforts of magistrates, clerks, and prosecutors it not infrequently happened, Mr. Goldstone suggested, that a prisoner did not realise that there were certain advantages to which he was entitled and facts in his favour that he ought to bring out. Nor did every accused person realise that the invitation to question witnesses against him was an opportunity for shaking their testimony. Since the police had always at their call the services of a skilled advocate, whether a solicitor or a trained member of their own force, it was not unfair to suggest that accused members of the public should not be prevented by poverty from having the same advantage” (ibid: 16 August 1932).

The presence of the missionary in court challenges the prevailing idea (as charted above) that at no stage of the legal process were prostitutes represented and defended, and that therefore, in the arena of the court it was the word of the police constable’s or constables’ against the prostitute’s. Of course, recourse to missionaries was not universal, and in this sense works to expose the distinctions made in Liverpool between the young and/or new prostitute and the old and/or persistent prostitute, the deserving and the undeserving, and the salvageable and the unsalvageable. After the “young beginner” appeared in court, Deacon informed the SOC how typically the outcome followed that:

“... the Justices then usually either discharge the prisoner under the Probation of Offenders Act, or bind her over, or if the case seems to require it, remand her on her own bail for a further four weeks in order that work may be found, or parents (if any) be communicated with, or test the sincerity of promises of future conduct, after which she is usually discharged under the Probation of Offenders Act” (ibid:19 August 1932).

This same procedure, Deacon relayed, was also used to deal with women charged with ‘offensive behaviour’ under the LCA, and as Everett had stated, “ difficulty has not been experienced in the courts in applying sec. 416 of the Liverpool Corporation Act, 1921” in relation to “women of questionable morality importuning” (TNA HO 326/8/271927-28).



As a point of clarity, the term ‘bind over’ – or ‘bound over’ – was used interchangeably with ‘dismissed’ or ‘discharged’ under P.O.A., and referred to instances where individuals were essentially “discharged with a caution” but did not have to report to a probation officer as oppose to cases where women were “put on probation under the charge of the Probation Officer or some similar persons” (TNA HO/326/7/9/1928). More importantly, when Deacon talked about such a procedure being applicable to “first offenders,” he went on to clarify that “they are not necessarily first offenders,” and as we shall see in chapter seven, it certainly appears that probation was used more laterally during this period (ibid). “These methods of dealing with young beginners,” Deacon noted, “have had considerable success” (TNA HO/326/8/26/1927-28). The statistical evidence Deacon had at his disposal from the various religious organisations and the probation officers involved in such work certainly corroborated this view. For example, of the 44 cases referred to female police court missionaries from the Church of England Temperance Society in 1927 under the ‘28 days’ adjournment stipulation, “37 proved satisfactory; 7 unsatisfactory” (TNA HO/326/7/9/1928). According to Deacon, the presence of the missionaries or probation officers in court was for most women a welcome intervention, a view which sat in stark contrast to the LWPP’s argument that legislatively dealing with solicitation and offensive behaviour cases resulted in “social displacement” (ibid; TNA HO/326/8/56/1927-28). Deacon concluded this section of his evidence by articulating how he was, “pleased to see in reading through the letters very many of the girls had written afterwards from home and other places to the Missionary in very nice terms thanking them for their kindness” (TNA HO/326/7/9/1928). Yet, whilst there was definitely unity amongst all four of Liverpool’s representatives that probation was both a suitable and successful method of dealing with younger and newer offenders, Bathe, Potter and Everett called for a strengthening of the system whereby magistrates would have the discretionary power to enforce “a condition of residence” on probation orders with the anticipation that “stricter supervision” would be granted (TNA HO/326/8/56/1927-28; TNA HO/326/8/27/1927-28). In fact, Bathe went on to suggest that “steps should be taken to provide suitable Probation Homes for such cases,” surely an indication that the Victorian model of residential control had not entirely fallen out of favour by the interwar period (TNA HO/326/8/60/1927-28). The increasing usages made of probation by

Liverpool's CJS at this time in many ways equates with Garland's theory of 'penal welfarism' in which he argues that the period 1880-1970 witnessed the homogenisation of a "crime control formula" that favoured "rehabilitative interventions" within the community rather than "retributive punishments" within the penal sphere (Garland 2001: 34). For Garland, in this climate where rehabilitation of the mind took precedence over incarceration of the body, policy-making was increasingly offender focussed whilst "protecting the public was rarely a motivating theme" (ibid: 12). Certainly, the emphasis of probation for the official and unofficial regulators in Liverpool resided with the offender as oppose to the offended or potentially offended. The rate with which such methods were drawn upon is examined below, whilst the scope of their application, and, most importantly the rates of success are all points which will be critically examined in sections three and four.

If the capabilities of the current laws were understood to adequately curtail prostitutes at the onset of their offending, then at the other end of the spectrum they were perceived to have little impact upon deterring habitual offenders. "Old and hardened offenders" – as Deacon called them – presented a particular dilemma for Liverpool's CJS (TNA HO/326/7/9/1928). Probation "in the case of older offenders" was, Deacon told the SOC, "not usually a success" (ibid). The usual methods of dealing with such women, therefore, relied chiefly on the issuing of fines or short-term prison sentences, neither of which were believed to adequately deal with the problem; "In my opinion, and, I believe, in that of many of my fellow justices, the present powers of dealing with prostitution are not very satisfactory or, indeed, calculated to attain the ends desired" (ibid). As stipulated within the relevant clauses under the TPCA, the VA, and the LCA, persons dealt with for solicitation offences were "liable to a penalty not exceeding forty shillings for each offence" (See, Town Police Clauses Act, 1847, sec. 28, 10 & 11 Victoria, c.89; Liverpool Corporation Act, 1921, sec. 416, 11 & 12, Geo. V, c. 74). Deacon informed the SOC how, "in recent years," Liverpool's magistrates had largely "abandoned the practice of inflicting fines upon women for solicitation," because they did not "believe in fines as a deterrent to prostitution as a broad principle," a belief presumably rooted in the continued flow of certain prostitutes through the courts time and time

again (TNA HO/326/7/9/1928). Everett concurred with Deacon, stating, how in his opinion pecuniary fines were “of the least good as a deterrent” (TNA HO/326/7/10/1928).

However, fines were not only problematic for the CJS because they typically failed to prevent prostitutes from re-offending, but because they were seen to perpetuate further criminal activity. Firstly, this could be seen in the fact that in order to meet the fines issued against them or make up for the shortfall they had incurred in their finances as a result of paying the fine, women were seen to reengage in prostitution in order to meet these ends. Indeed, when Lord Sandhurst forwarded his proposal for the compulsory detention in homes for girls under the age of 18 charged with prostitution, he rationalised this by arguing; “What happens when a girl has paid her fine? The very first thing she does is to rush to the street to recoup herself for that loss ...” (*HoL Debates*, vol. 29, 7 May 1918, col. 955). Secondly, Deacon implied that a culture existed in Liverpool whereby third parties – often from the criminal underworld – were paying the fines on behalf of prostitutes “out of the profits of prostitution.” “... these fines, 40/- and so on, are frequently paid either by a man who has some association with the woman or even by the lodging housekeepers with whom the women reside” (TNA HO/326/7/9/1928). Interestingly, a few years earlier similar concerns had been voiced to the Lord Chancellor and the Home Office by both the Joint Parliamentary Advisory Council (JPAC) and the Prison Commission (PC). In the Spring of 1923, the JPAC instigated correspondence with the Lord Chancellor, Lord Cave, and the Legal Assistant Under-Secretary (for the Home Office), Sir Ernley Blackwell, informing them of an “evil” that had “sprung up” in connection with what they referred to as “the payment of fines by disreputable persons” (TNA HO 45/12001/1923).

Their argument followed that the procedures set out under the Criminal Administration Act of 1914 in relation to the payment of fines – in which “any person can come to a prison and pay for any prisoner ... The fine is paid at the prison gate, no name or address need be given, and the prisoner must be released forthwith at any time during the day up to 10 p.m.” – had resulted in “an abuse” whereby “undesirable persons seeing a girl convicted and sentenced to imprisonment in default of a fine, go late at night to the prison, tender the fine and take her away” (*ibid*). They noted

how “frequently men or women from disorderly houses, or persons of a similar class” came to the pay the fines of girls and women (ibid). In certain cases, they said, women had been released from prison late at night because their fines had been met “although the girls themselves were frightened at the idea of being handed over to the people at the gate who had paid the fines” (ibid). The Home Office took the stance that the JPAC had “greatly exaggerated” the situation, whilst their suggestion that an amendment should be made in the upcoming Criminal Justice Bill of 1924 which stipulated that fines were “to be paid in every case at the Police Court,” was deemed by Blackwell as “quite useless;” “The Clerks at the Police Courts would know nothing whatever about the woman, except what they had heard in court, and would not be able to find anything about the person tendering the fine” (ibid).

At the same time, the PC were putting together a case of their own with the anticipation that legislative change would end this “evil” in connection to the payment of young women’s fines at prisons by “undesirable characters” (ibid). It was, interestingly, the Roman Catholic priest at Liverpool Prison who had first raised concerns about this problem to the PC. Following similar reports emerging from Holloway Prison, in July 1922 the PC set about trying to quantify “the extent of the evil,” sending a circular to all female prisons “asking for information as to numbers” over the following six month period (ibid). The replies showed that such cases had been experienced at five prisons – Birmingham, Holloway, Liverpool, Manchester and Preston (ibid). At Birmingham, 3 out of the 15 men who paid fines on behalf of women prisoners over the six months “were known to be ‘bullies’,” and “with the exception of 3 or 4, all who paid the fines were open to suspicion” (ibid). At Holloway, most of the women who paid the fines were noted to be brothel keepers, whilst at Manchester 23 out of the 35 women paying fines could give “no satisfactory account of themselves” (ibid). At Preston, 3 out of the 4 payments made by women on behalf of female prisoners were prostitutes. At Liverpool, it was recorded that “there was no male of bad character” paying fines, although “the women who paid the fines were often of the prostitute class, the women helping one another” (ibid). Whilst the PC recognised that this evidence suggested that the ‘evil’ was “not perhaps large in extent” they concluded that it was “definite,” and that more

crucially it had been “rendered possible by the provisions of the existing law” (ibid). Their proposal was that an amendment should be made which stated that;

“...where a man or woman attends in person at a prison to pay a woman’s fine, the Governor or Officer acting for him shall be empowered to require reasonable proof that he or she is a near relation, and in the absence of such evidence, to refuse to accept the fine without the Order of a Magistrate for the area in which the prison is situated, granted after application made to him in open court” (ibid).

In the end, no procedural amendments were secured, with Blackwell taking the opinion that these problems were somewhat inevitable when dealing with prostitutes; “prostitutes very seldom have respectable friends. They have generally deliberately cut themselves entirely adrift from respectable relations, and these are the last persons to whom they would think of applying for help if they got into prison” (ibid: 1925).

In spite of these pitfalls connected with the imposition of fines, Deacon advocated the use of a system which enabled magistrates to issue “some kind of progressive (pecuniary) penalty for convictions for second, third and further offences” (TNA HO/326/7/9/1928). Under the current system, the maximum penalty of 40/ was seen to be doing little to curtail the problematic figure of the habitual prostitute. In the midst of Liverpool’s rapidly declining criminal statistics for prostitution offences then, the CJS were calling for harsher penalties. And Deacon was certainly not alone in his thinking. Mr. Robert Bell, the Clerk to the Justices of Manchester, also informed the SOC that he was in favour of progressive penalties, suggesting that the tariff of 40/ remain for the first offence and then increase to “£5 for the second offence, and £5 or imprisonment for one month for the third offence” (TNA HO/326/8/24/1927-28). Whilst the SOC concluded that the imposition of “heavy fines from comparatively trivial offences are inappropriate,” they too backed progressive pecuniary penalties “for second and subsequent offences,” and argued that in the case of persistent offenders “the power of imprisonment without the option of a fine should be conferred” (*Cmd.* 3231/1928).

The other method of punishment available to the CJS for dealing with “hardened offenders” was that of short-term imprisonment (a maximum of 14 days under the TPCA and a maximum of 1 month under the VA). Just as objections had been levelled against the effectiveness of fines under the existing legislative capabilities so too were doubts raised about how far imprisonment worked as a mechanism for deterrence and/or reform. Indeed, Deacon argued that for some prostitutes, a short stint in prison represented a welcome break from working the streets rather than necessarily being an infringement upon one’s liberty; “...It is a period of rest and it is a period of recuperation of health. I have heard it – it seems a sad thing to say – it has been suggested to me that it takes the form of a rest cure which in other classes might take the form of going to Harrogate. It has a humorous side, but it also has a very sad side” (TNA HO/326/7/9/1928). The LWPP objected to imprisonment on the grounds that they understood it to further isolate and ostracise such women from their families and communities (the idea of ‘social displacement’), and that experiences within the penal sphere (for example, who they mixed with, how they were treated, and the coping strategies they engineered) served to increase a woman’s likelihood of reoffending rather than reducing it; “... imprisonment degrades the girl in her own eyes, and often hardens her. We notice amongst all ages, that prostitutes are often seen back on the streets directly after they come out of prison” (TNA HO/326/8/56/1927-28). Similar concerns were raised again in the mid-1930s when the League of Nations carried out a series of survey-based investigations culminating in *the Report on Enquiry into Measure of Rehabilitation of Adult Prostitutes* (League of Nations 1939). The responses they received led them to conclude how although “women sentenced to imprisonment may benefit from the social service offered by voluntary workers who visit women prisoners during their sentences, and also from assistance given by the Prisoners’ Aid Society to prisoners on discharge,” given that “... adult women, particularly the recidivist, is not sufficiently long in prison” the help on offer from social services were unable “to have any effect upon her” (TNA PCOM/9/141/1931-39). Yet, if short-term imprisonment was understood to do little by way of deterring the prostitute – and thus reducing the rates of prostitution –for Liverpool’s CJS it did have a specific function; “the preservation of good order and decency in the streets” (TNA HO/326/7/9/1928).

And, it was with this function in mind that both Deacon and Everett recommended that legislative amendments be made that “permitted detention for a considerable period, exercisable, perhaps, only by Quarter Sessions after commitment from Courts of Summary Jurisdiction” (TNA HO/326/8/26/1927-28). They wanted to see a system created similar to that used to deal with habitual drunks or incorrigible rogues, whereby habitual prostitutes could be detained for extended periods, “say twelve months,” within an appropriate setting such as a reformatory (TNA HO/326/7/9/1928). When the SOC asked Deacon if he was, “only justified in the taking up and arresting and sending to prison of these women upon the ground that you believe it to be necessary for the maintenance of good order and decency in the streets,” he replied, “that is so, yes” (TNA HO/326/7/10/1928). Similarly, the Committee asked Everett whether his proposal for longer periods of imprisonment was “with the object of reforming them, or abolishing prostitution altogether?” (ibid). Everett’s response was particularly illuminating; “Largely I think it is with the object of removing an evil influence” (ibid). Evidently, Victorian anxieties which had positioned the prostitute as a source of ‘moral contagion’ were still in circulation by the interwar period, and, moreover, were still informing regulatory responses to prostitution. For Deacon, the habitual prostitute posed “as much danger to the community as a contagious animal” (TNA HO/326/7/9/1928). In a climate where – by his own admissions – the number of prostitutes infected with venereal diseases was negligible (“this has nothing to do with the prevention of disease”), this was not about the literal spread of disease but the discursive spread of immorality as a result of the prostitute’s presence in the streets (ibid). Specifically, the call for extended terms of imprisonment was contingent upon the belief that “the example and presence of these habitual offenders in the streets must undoubtedly lead to others” (ibid). Removing the habitual from the street was largely about preventing “the turning of younger girls into prostitutes by the influence of the older woman” (ibid).

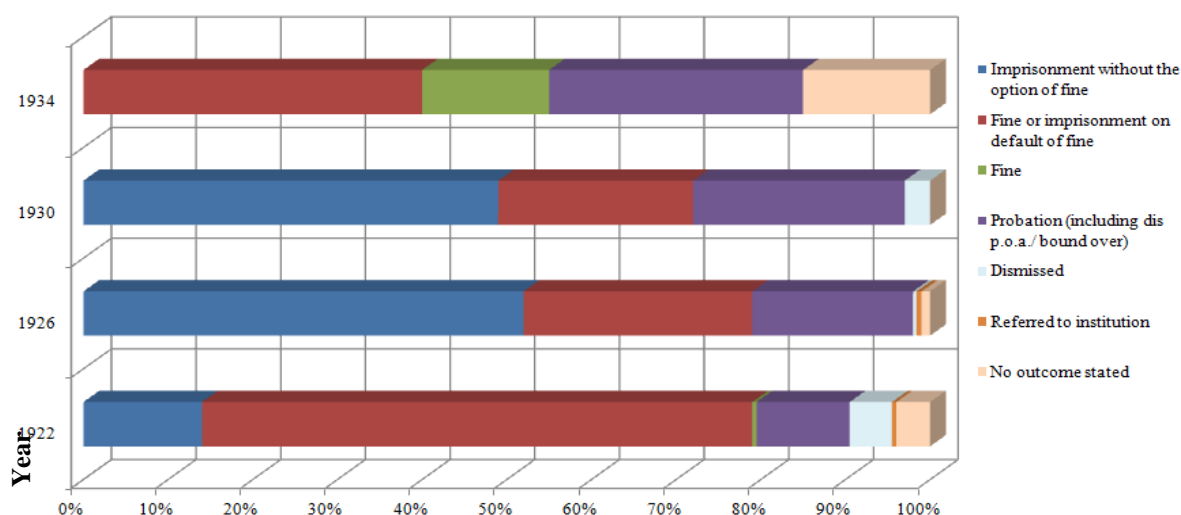
Concerns over ‘moral contagion’ had been of paramount importance from the onset of the decade. A provision enacted in the LCA of 1921 which “prohibited the reception of young girls in Common Lodging Houses where prostitutes reside,” was deemed by CC Caldwell to be “a valuable

new power in the interests of the young” (LRO H352/2/WAT/1919). Frustrations surrounding the habitual prostitute were not unique to Liverpool. The establishment of the Departmental Committee on Persistent Offenders (1931-1932) was in itself a manifestation of how pronounced such frustrations were with regards to the habitual criminal more broadly by the interwar period, whilst many of their suggestions concurred with the standpoint taken by Liverpool’s CJS a few years earlier concerning the imprisonment of habitual prostitutes. For example, the Report noted how, “in most cases the only practicable course open to a court when dealing with a persistent offender is to send him to prison for a period proportionate to the gravity of the particular offence of which he stands convicted. During this period society is temporarily protected against injury from this individual but the period of protection is limited” (*Cmd. 4090/1932: 3*). In this sense, if the methods used to deal with younger and newer prostitutes in Liverpool signalled a move towards what Garland terms as ‘penal welfarism,’ then the methods used to deal with the old and hardened offender were neither offender-focussed nor community based. In fact, “protecting the public” was *the* “motivating theme” of imprisoning habitual offenders (Garland 2001: 12).

### **(3:5) Punishments and penalties: Experiences**

Using the information detailed in the court registers it is possible to gauge how exactly these official responses to prostitution played out in the court arena, how they impacted upon women’s experiences of legislative penalties, and to establish whether the longitudinal course of judicial outcomes accorded with the evidence presented to the SOC. So, was there a growing recourse to probation over the period? Had Liverpool’s magistrates largely “done away with fines” by the

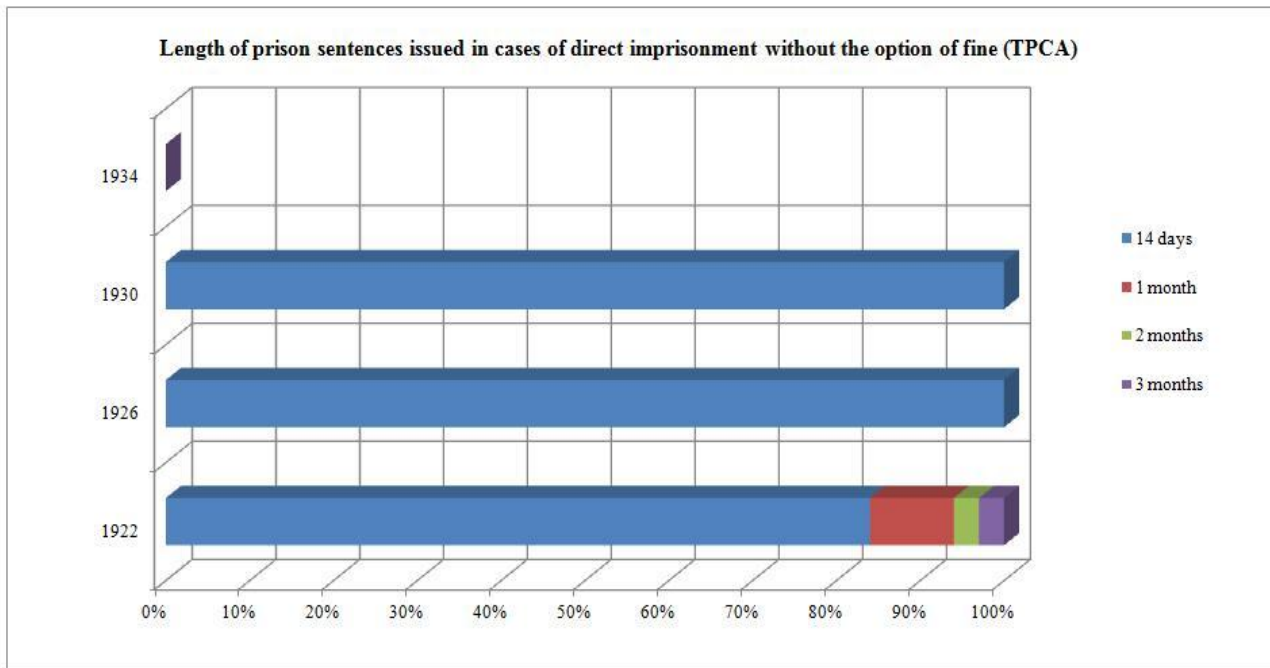
**Graph 4** Outcomes of court proceedings for the offence of solicitation dealt with under the TPCA (as a %)





1920s (TNA HO/326/7/9/1928)? Were women charged as ‘common prostitutes’ more likely to be referred to prison, and was there evidence to suggest that the CJS were exceeding the maximum penalties for prostitution offences?

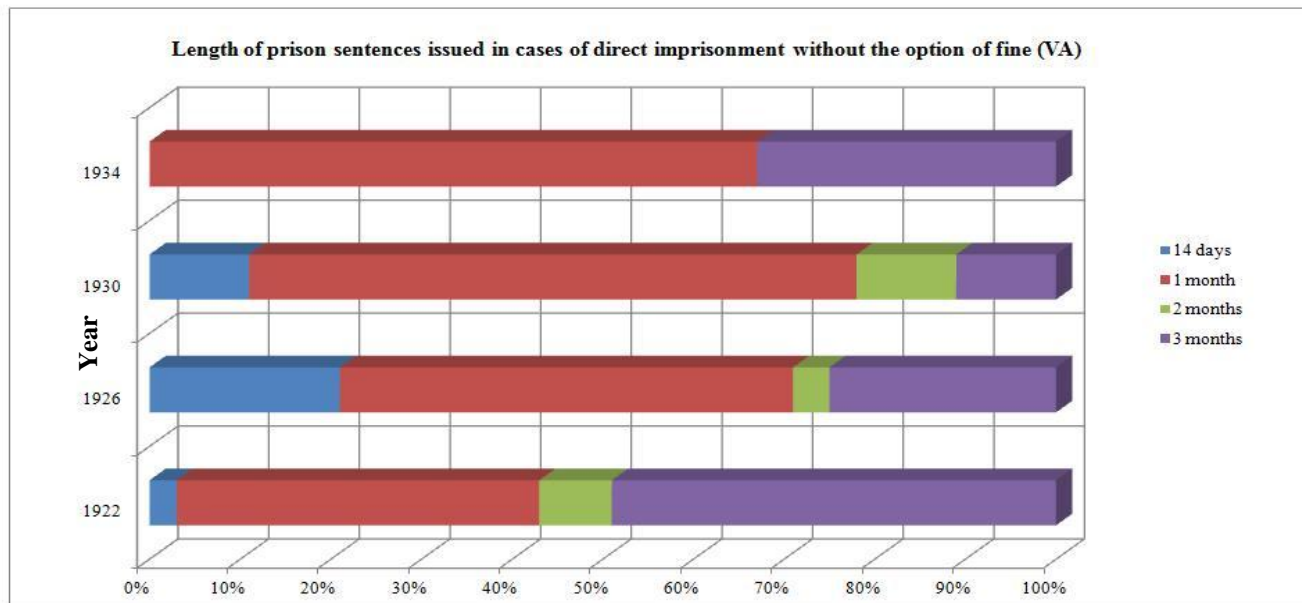
Graph 4 above details the nature of judicial outcomes under the TPCA broken down as a proportion for four sampled years. As it highlights, there were significant alterations in the way ‘common prostitutes’ were collectively judged over the course of the research period. The proportion of women receiving a probationary penalty did rise year on year, from 11% in 1922 to 19% in 1926, rising again to 25% in 1930 and peaking at 30% in 1934. As a point of clarity, it must be remembered that in the year 1934 there were just 10 proceedings brought against professional prostitutes (8 of which were dealt with under the TPCA), and therefore it is difficult, and potentially misleading, to establish longitudinal patterns based upon such small numbers. Nevertheless, the overall trend does suggest that even women known to be ‘common prostitutes’ were more likely to incur a probationary penalty as the period progressed. But, as the information relayed to the SOC reveals, probation was not seen to be an appropriate judicial response for all women, rather its applicability was contingent upon the age (young) and/or offending history (new offender) of the individual. At the other end of the spectrum, therefore, there was a greater recourse to penal punishments over the period (with the exception of the year 1934) without the option of fine, suggesting that both Deacon’s and Everett’s view that imprisonment was the most suitable method of dealing with the ‘hardened offender’ was manifesting itself in the judicial outcomes. In 1922 just 14% of prostitutes were dealt with in this way, but by 1926 this figure had increased significantly to 52%, dropping slightly to 49% by 1930. This, of course, was very much connected to the other method used to deal with such women of issuing pecuniary penalties, and the statistical evidence corroborates with Deacon’s claim that the use of fines had fallen out of favour in recent years. So, in 1922, 65% of women were issued a fine with the option of imprisonment on default of payment, whilst 0.5% were issued a straight fine. In 1926 the proportion totalled at just 27%, declining again by 1930 to 23%, with no cases of straight fines in these two years. As the graph suggests, referrals to institutions from the court were extremely rare (a point I return to in chapter six), as were examples of women being dismissed from court without any form of penalty.



**Graph 5**

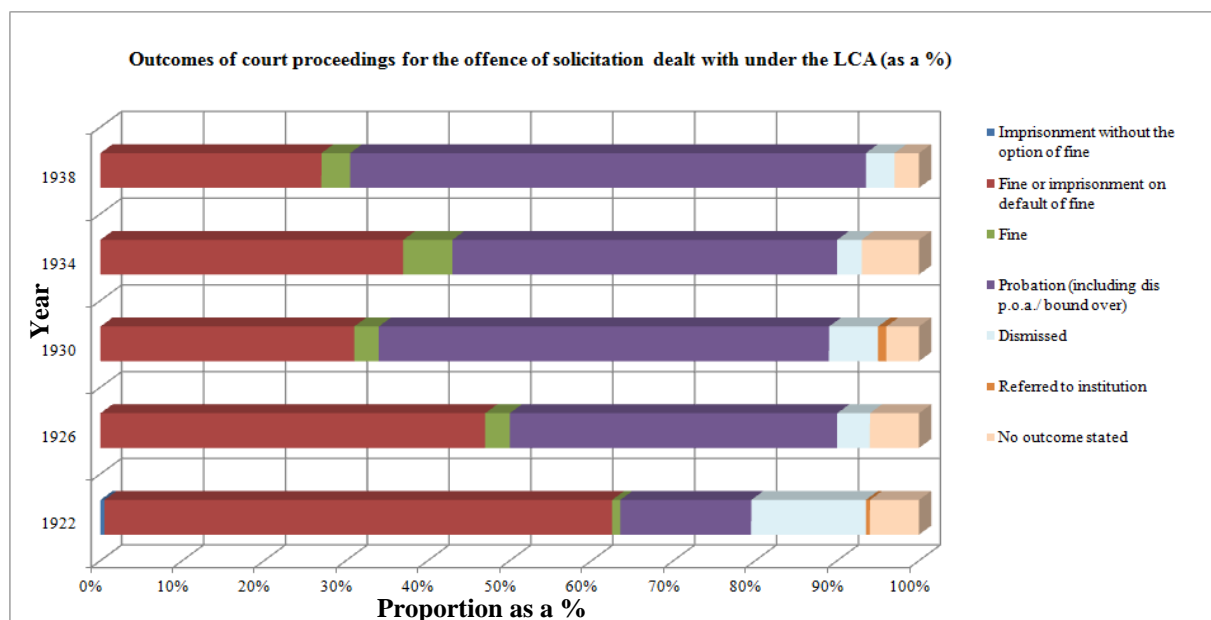
Under the TPCA it was stipulated that a person “may be committed to prison there to remain for a period not exceeding 14 days” (Town Police Clauses Act, 1847, sec. 28, 10 & 11 Victoria, c.89). Whilst there was an increase between 1922 and 1930 of the proportion of women being referred to prison without the option of fine, the statistical data in Graph 5 shows how in spite of judicial calls for longer periods of imprisonment that from 1926 the CJS were not exceeding the guidelines with 100% of cases dealt with in this way in 1926 and 1930 referring to periods of 14 days. In fact, the trend was one of greater judicial adherence to keep within the bounds laid out within the provision as the period progressed. In 1922, in 10% of straight imprisonment cases women had received a stretch of 1 month, with 3% receiving 2 months and 3% receiving 3 months. It is probably no coincidence that this move to complete adherence occurred as public and political attention came to focus upon the legitimacy of judicial responses to prostitution between 1922 and 1930, and a greater transparency was afforded upon such responses by way of the scandals outlined above, and periodic reviews such as the SOC and the RCPMP.

**Graph 6**



What about those women dealt with under the VA? Were they more likely to receive longer prison sentences as the period unfolded? The maximum penalty under the VA was set at “any time not exceeding one calendar month” (Vagrancy Act, 1824, sec. 3, 5 Geo. IV, c. 83). As graph 6 clearly shows, this maximum period was consistently exceeded throughout the period, although levels of excess did decline year on year with the exception of 1934 (again the same interpretative cautions as before need to be levelled in regards to this year). So, in 1922 58% of direct imprisonment cases were for periods over 1 month, with 50% denoting periods of 3 months. By 1926 this proportion had dropped to 29% (25% at 3 months), and by 1930 was at 22% (11% at 3 months). Again, the picture emerging is one where collectively prostitutes were likely to experience less severe prison sentences as the period progressed, but unlike the TPCA the CJS were willing to flex the maximum tariffs outlined in relation to the VA. The key distinction between the VA and the TPCA was, of course, that the former was used in relation to cases of actual rather than anticipated or implied immorality and thus perhaps the CJS had more latitude in dealing with these cases how they best saw fit without being liable to public and political scrutiny.

**Graph 7**



Graph 7 refers to judicial outcomes in cases where ‘unknown women’ soliciting were dealt with under the LCA. Unsurprisingly, there were no incidences of ‘imprisonment without the option of fine’ across the period given that automatic imprisonment was not an option under this provision. Again, the pattern indicates that there was a greater use of probationary measures as the period progressed, increasing from 16% in 1922 to 40% in 1936, 55% in 1930, dropping slightly to 47% in 1934 and reaching a high of 63% in 1938. Concurrently, there was a decline in the number of women who received a fine with the option of imprisonment on default of payment, shifting from a high of 62% in 1922 to 47% in 1926, 31% in 1930 before increasing to 37% in 1934 and reaching a low of 27% in 1938. The changing dynamics in the principal methods used to deal with ‘unknown women’ are likely to have signalled both a growing perception that probation was working sufficiently to deter new and/or young offenders, as well as growing trepidation from within the CJS as the appropriateness and legitimacy of such women being dealt with in much the same way as ‘common prostitutes’ were - i.e. with pecuniary fines with the option of imprisonment – received increasing criticism from the political and public domains, as well as broader regulatory bodies from within Liverpool such as the LWPP. As I go on to explore in chapter seven there may have also been a correlation between the anomalous increase in the issuing of fines with the option of imprisonment and reduced recourse to probation in 1934, and the extremely low numbers of professional prostitutes dealt with under the TPCA and VA in this year; this might be about who exactly was being dealt with under the LCA as the period unfolded.

As the evidence presented to the SOC has illuminated, responses from Liverpool regarding the efficacy of the current solicitation laws were framed along dichotomous lines. On the one hand, there was general agreement that the legislative powers available to the CJS were working to successfully curtail and deter young prostitutes at the onset of their offending. In terms of the older and recidivist offender, however, there was a sense that the laws as they stood in their current form were wielding little in the way of reduced offending rates. This was a situation which the SOC encapsulated brilliantly when they suggested to Deacon that in Liverpool, “the operation of the law has succeeded in deterring the amateur class and has led to a residuum of professional practitioners who occur again and again” (TNA HO/326/7/9/1928). Indeed, as the graphs above have highlighted, these distinctions were upheld in the arena of the court informing the longitudinal alterations and trends in the dispensation of penalties against prostitute women. Paying attention to the nuances or shades of the prostitute is paramount to making sense of why this paradoxical situation was able to emerge, of understanding why it was possible for the CJS to be simultaneously prostitute-focussed and public-focussed, why twentieth century methods of community based regulation like probation were advocated alongside distinctly Victorian measures of penal incarceration, and why the regulators themselves could feel both in control and frustrated. As Carol Smart has argued, the law exists as an intrinsically contradictory force which works to construct women as “powerful and powerless, as sexual agents but also as victims, as dangerous but in need of protection” (Smart 1992: 8). This appears to have a particular resonance in the context of interwar Liverpool. As we shall see, similar distinctions between the young amateur and the hardened professional informed broader narratives of prostitution beyond the political domain (see chapter four) as well as policing on the ground (chapter five). And, in chapter seven the operational uses of the TPCA, VA, LCA are reconsidered in relation to the individual and collective experiences of a sampled dataset, in order to ask questions such as, was the LCA exclusively used in relation to ‘unknown’ women? Was probation really reserved for younger and newer prostitutes or was it applied more laterally? Did recidivist offenders experience progressively harsher sentences?

### **(3:6) The recommendations of the SOC and beyond**

After taking into consideration the extensive evidence presented over the course of their inquiry, the SOC came up with a collection of recommendations for legislative revision. Their principal suggestion was similar to that made by Deacon, arguing that the “existing general and local legislation” in England and Scotland should be repealed and substituted by “a simple enactment of general application constituting it an offence for any person of either sex to importune a person of the opposite sex for immoral purposes in any street or public place” (*Cmd.* 3231/1928). In order to ensure that future legislation be protected from manipulation and/or confusion, the SOC expressed that the term “importune” be “defined as referring to the acts of molestation by offensive words or behaviour” (*ibid*). Similarly, in the quest to restore confidence and trust in the administration of prostitution-related legislation, they argued that in order for a conviction to be carried out it was essential that “the evidence of one or more of the persons aggrieved” be submitted (*ibid*).

In spite of the meticulous nature of the inquiry, the exhaustive number of organisations and individuals who presented information to the Committee from all over Britain, and the long and arduous road to securing legislative review in the first place, no legislative amendments were secured from the recommendations of the SOC. Why exactly this was the case remains unclear. Perhaps the task of securing legislative change was just too challenging given the high level of public and political interest in the solicitation laws at this juncture and more importantly the fact that the distinct lack of concordance and vision which had characterised the path to the SOC continued to underpin both the evidence presented to the committee and their final recommendations. Indeed, an appendix attached to the final report publication detailed the objections a significant number of committee members continued to have to various recommendations, a powerful reflection of just how controversial not only the current solicitation laws were but also how amendments to them could be. And, crucially it would not be until some thirty years later that legislative changes were finally made to the solicitation laws with the recommendations of Wolfenden Report culminating in the Street Offences Act 1959. On the other hand, this could have had more to do with the unfortunate timing of the SOC’s Report publication being shortly followed in May 1929 with a change of government. Clearly, momentum was lost in these decisive months following its publication and seems to have dissipated completely early into

Ramsay MacDonald's second Labour government of 1929-1931. By late March 1930 the Home Secretary J.R. Clynes informed the House of Commons that "he did not see his way at present to introduce legislation on this subject," in spite of a draft bill having "been brought to an advanced stage" (TNA HO/45/21766/1930). By the end of 1930, having once more flitted briefly with the possibility of amendment the Home Office concluded that "no further action seems necessary" (ibid:1930).

Whilst this marked the end of state driven initiatives for legislative review during the interwar years, periodic attempts were made by successive governments to demonstrate that they were in control of the prostitution 'problem'. For instance, as objections to the unjust legislative treatment of prostitutes in the 1920s gave way to a growing culture of police inertia throughout the 1930s, the irony was that accusations of toleration were as problematic for the government as accusations of heavy-handedness had once been. In 1937, in what can only be described as a brilliantly planned publicity stunt, the Home Secretary, Sir Samuel Hoare, spent "a night out" with a beat patrol from Vine Street, "the station controlling nearly all the West End" (*DM*, 12 October 1937). The purpose of this escapade was relatively simple; for the Home Secretary to demonstrate that in spite of prevailing views the officers at the symbolic centre of British policing were actively "tackling the menace of prostitution" (ibid 12 October 1937). Crucially, such events spoke more of political attempts to appease the public rather than attempts to readdress fundamental concerns surrounding the solicitation laws which remained unsolved in spite of the SOC and the RCPPP. Yet, just as had been the case prior to the SOC, non-partisan organisations continued to lobby for legislative amendments, although the depression of the early 1930s and the difficult political conditions it provoked meant that efforts were less concerted, durable and publicised as they had been in the pre-SOC period. For example, after stepping away from their lobbying trail in the early to mid 1930s, the AMSH returned with a new agenda and new focus in the latter part of the decade. Crucially, this time their lobbying focused exclusively upon amending the legislation used to deal with "women not known to be prostitutes but alleged to be soliciting," for just as the SOC had pointed out to Everett and Deacon ten years earlier, the AMSH understood the law in such cases to be "twisted and strained against them" for the purpose of procuring a conviction (TNA

HO/45/21766/1936). As was the case under Section 416 of the LCA, Section 54 (13) of the Metropolitan Police Act (MPA) also operated at this time to target unknown or amateur women soliciting by contending that their public behaviour was “likely to occasion a breach of the peace” (ibid: 1937). The AMSH argued how:

“...first by charging a woman or girl not known as a prostitute under the “breach of the peace” section and next by charging her as a “prostitute” on the strength of the first conviction obtained by straining the law, some 2,000 women and girls a year are fined or imprisoned as “common prostitutes” and only retain this label of stigma for life but pass at once into a class of legal outlaws subjected to special legislation and exempt from certain protections of the ordinary law” (ibid: 1936).

Crucially, the AMSH were not alone in their objections. The little political attention prostitution did receive by the late 1930s was increasingly focussed upon the legislative treatment of ‘unknown women.’ Indeed, in 1936 the MP for Edinburgh East, Frederick Pethick-Lawrence, voiced his concerns that laws such as the LCA were being capitalised upon by police constables to secure convictions free from controversy in cases where they were “not prepared to swear that the woman is a common prostitute” (ibid: 1936). For Pethick-Lawrence the “straining of the law” was seen to create “loopholes for abuse” by allowing regulators to defer from one controversial set of laws – the solicitation laws – to another – i.e. the LCA and MPA, and in the process of doing so navigating the contentions which had proved so contentious in the 1920s (ibid:1936). The final attempt at legislative reform during the interwar period came with Robert Thurton’s Public Places (Order and Decency) Bill introduced to the HoC in 1938. Closely emulating the principal recommendations of the SOC, his Bill sought to remedy the laws used “unequally and harshly” to deal with both professional and amateur prostitutes by removing all gender specific terminology and ensuring that convictions could not be imposed on the basis of police evidence alone” (TNA HO/45/24902/1938). Perhaps unsurprisingly, as had typified all attempts at legislative change throughout the period, Thurton’s Bill failed to be implemented. By the close of the period legislative power continued to reside firmly in the hands of local authorities. Ironically, an



increased recourse to provisions such as the LCA and the MPA by regulators seeking to avoid the criticisms which had been levelled against their use of the solicitation laws in the 1920s had led to a distorted impression of decline in the 1930s. Moreover, this change in regulatory tack did not result in the dampening of legislative centred objections, but rather the concerns remained the same but now tended to focus upon the legislative treatment of the amateur as oppose to her professional counterpart. The politicisation of the amateur at this moment not only challenges the scholarly tendency to reduce her to ‘mythical’ status, but moreover as we have seen the professional and the amateur were intrinsically politically and legislatively linked and thus to dismiss the amateur is to risk limiting understandings of the professional. As we shall see in chapter four, this symbiotic relationship also permeated within the popular psyche, proving to have considerable bearing upon representations of prostitution and the prostitute.

### **(4:0) Introduction**

In 1916, A. Maude Royden, a preacher and prominent member of the newly founded AMSH, published the findings of a female-led investigation into the causes of prostitution. A statistical survey based upon the responses made by 669 prostitutes to various social and rescue workers (mainly in the London area), *DP* claimed to be the first enquiry in which the “intellectual detachment” of the author[s] allowed the participant’s experiences to direct the study’s content. According to Royden, such inquiries traditionally tended to follow a methodology whereby the investigators sought “to prove a case rather than to acquire knowledge, and knowledge is sought only to support their proof” (Royden ed., 1916: vii). Many of the case profiles utilised had in fact been bequeathed to Royden by AMSH colleague and president Dr. Helen Wilson, who herself had carried out a detailed statistical inquiry into the causes of prostitution – specifically economic causes – on behalf of the International Federation in 1913 (Wilson 1913). However, in *DP*, as the responses given by this sample of prostitutes necessitated, a broader range of causes were explored, from homelessness to seduction and from feeble-mindedness to the perils of adolescence and the limitations of the female labour market. Indeed, the ‘alleged causes’ given by these 669 women with regards to their original entry into prostitution totalled at no less than 43 categories, and covered a breadth of reasons ranging from the trivial such as ‘to buy sweets’, to life-changing events such as the ‘death of a child’ (see Table 1). As the scale and range of categories documented indicates, there was no mono-causal explanation as to why women entered prostitution at this time, and thus it is not the purpose of this chapter to decipher nor impose retrospective causations upon interwar prostitutes, but rather to establish the dominant discourses which were in circulation at this time. Essentially, this is about understanding why certain ‘causes’ were invested in and gained currency at this moment whilst others were rejected or overlooked. Identifying these contemporary beliefs is key to understanding in part why prostitution was constructed as such a ‘hot topic’ at this moment, what it was seen to undermine, and how it was regulated, as well as how exactly such representations informed and were formed by regulatory responses, political discourses, and prostitute experiences.

**Table 1:** Alleged causes for becoming prostitutes based upon 669 women in, A. Maude Royden, ed., *DP: An Inquiry into the Causes Which Contribute to the Making of the Prostitute* (London, 1916).

	<b>Total.</b>	<b>Per cent.</b>
1. Vanity, love of pleasures, adventure	29	4.33
2. Bad companions	106	15.84
3. Wilful, unmanageable	9	1.34
4. Misled by mother or sister after absence from home	2	.31
5. Bad upbringing	103	15.4
6. Bad school companions	1	.15
7. Ignorance	3	.44
8. Lack of home or care, including girls who ran away	47	7
9. Out late, afraid to go home	2	.31
10. Up from provinces, not knowing London	6	.89
11. Lived with man who forced her to go on streets or abetted her	11	1.64
12. Husband sent her or acquiesced in her prostitution	11	1.64
13. Victim of exploitation	10	1.5
14. Non-resistant	11	1.64
15. Weak-minded	11	1.64
16. Sexual inclination	98	14.65
17. Curiosity	1	.15
18. Deficient will power	1	.15
19. Wandering disposition	1	.15
20. Drink	30	4.5
21. Left a widow, took to drink	7	1.04
22. Emotional catastrophe, such as death of relative, or desertion	6	.89
23. Death of a child	6	.89
24. Shock	1	.15
25. Left widow and destitute	4	.59
26. Deserted by husband	12	1.8
27. Left husband on account of his cruelty	3	.44
28. Divorced	2	.31
29. Lost character, home or employment, owing to relations with a man	47	7.02
30. Child to keep (unmarried)	15	2.24
31. Husband out of work	4	.59
32. Out of work	29	4.33
33. Failure to get on in work in which placed	4	.59
34. Deliberate for gain	8	1.2
35. To buy sweets	2	.31
36. To pay bridge debts	1	.15
37. Laziness	12	1.8
38. Low wages in former employment	3	.44
39. Destitute owing to fines (shop)	1	.15
40. Bad situation	2	.31
41. Seduction by employer	4	.59
42. Demoralising work conditions	2	.31
43. No place to go to on day out (domestic service)	1	.15

#### **(4:1) The economics of prostitution**

In his 1997 historiographical review article, Henderson reflected upon how “most [historians] now agree that prostitution is work” (Henderson 1997: 238). Indeed, my discussion of the key methodological trends which have shaped the literature of prostitution in chapter two testifies to the increasing attention scholars are placing upon the economics of prostitution. However, as illuminating as this methodological trajectory is, there is a danger that in our enthusiasm to reconstruct the daily working lives of prostitutes we assume that the link between economics and prostitution has always been self-evident, and thus, fail to hear the historical objections and/or silences which often permeated – or failed to permeate – contemporary discourses. As one interwar commentator wrote in an article ‘The Economics of Prostitution’ which appeared in *The Athenaeum* in 1918, “professed economists have never given even an intelligent amount of attention to the economic factor in its relation to social morality” (1918: 376). This, as we shall see, was a sentiment endorsed by a number of liberal observers, who argued that in economics – specifically the structural problem of women’s wages and employment opportunities – lay both the cause and solution to prostitution. Over the course of the interwar period, associations between economics and prostitution did strengthen, but interestingly in a way that served to further castigate the deviance of prostitutes rather than rationalise it. As the expanding parameters of prostitution worked to redirect focus away from the professional and towards the amateur, the economics of prostitution increasingly came to refer to individual greed and want for luxuries and commodities, in doing so further diluting the already shaky conceptualisations of prostitution as a form of labour.

#### **(4:2) Poverty and economic need?**

**Journalist:** Do you think that low wages are the main cause of dishonesty and prostitution amongst working girls?

**G.B.S.:** Of course they are. You do not hear any complaints of dishonesty and prostitution among the classes who can live comfortably without them. Women are still paid lower wages than men. But they need as much food and shelter and more expensive clothes. How are they expected to make up the difference? Evidently by some resource not open to me. When wages fall below subsistence point they make dishonesty and prostitution compulsory.

[ *Daily Mirror*, Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> April, 1937 ]

The relationship between low female wages and recruitment into prostitution which George Bernard Shaw noted in 1937 was one which had been articulated periodically throughout the interwar years. In fact, even before the Great War had ended, Sir Milligen had suggested in 1917- at the very time women's employment opportunities and wage levels were at their optimum - that to "increase by 25 per cent. the wages of the poorest class of female workers you decrease by 50 per cent. the recruits to prostitution" (quoted in Mrs. Alec- Tweedie 1917: 162). Over the space of the intervening years, it became clear that such conjectures were not just the preserve of strident socialists, but rather a concern which was to be aired in mainstream political debates, utilised by opponents of differential sex-legislation, and considered by social commentators.

In the aftermath of the war, Stringer warned in his 1925 social exploration, *Moral Evil in London*, that the ephemeral increase in women's wages the war had allowed for had bred a generation of women whose newfound expectations were unable to be met in peacetime. "Many girls also are now unable to command the high wages which they obtained during the war, and having become accustomed to a certain style of living, they attempt to regain it by illegitimate means" (Stringer 1925: 170). For Stringer, this was largely a problem of individual greed and the incitement of immorality which could occur when girls failed to accept a lifestyle which was within their means, or when "set an unfortunate example" by colleagues who were also poorly paid (ibid: 169). However, for others, this was a deeper structural problem of women's wages, employment opportunities and access to unemployment provisions, which the "artificial prosperity" of the war had served to expose and then exacerbate in its aftermath (*HoC Debates*, vol.163, 27 April 1923, col.859). In 1923, during a second reading of the Prevention of the Unemployment Bill in the House of Commons – a provision which sought to regularise the demand for labour through the establishment of local Employment Committees – Walton Newbold the M.P. for Motherwell (often referred to as the first Communist M.P.), drew the House's attention to the link between women's access to unemployment benefit and their ascent into prostitution. "The greater part of prostitution is caused by economic conditions.... the inadequate amount of unemployment benefit given to working-class women is responsible for the spread of prostitution in this country" (ibid: col. 903). In fact, even Stringer admitted that "some suitable scheme of insurance would be a boon,"

particularly to those women “engaged in various seasonal occupations which leave them unemployed for long periods” (Stringer 1925: 170). The pressures associated with seasonal employment, and moreover, the stretches of short-term unemployment which accompanied it, was an issue that acutely aggravated the female labour market in Liverpool, as I discuss in chapter eight. However, prostitution was not an act just resorted to by women out of work. The ‘part-time’ prostitute was often cited as representing a body of women – particularly young single women – who periodically engaged in prostitution as a means of augmenting their wages and negotiating the financial limitations of their daily employment situations. For example, on her exploration into the underworld of 1920s London, Chesterton came across one such case, where a girl’s casual relationships with men became her means to both financial and emotional survival;

“I only earn enough to pay the rent of my room, my fares, and a bit of food night and morning... I should have to scrap to get shoes, let alone clothes. And it isn’t only that. I should have to go back night after night to my lodging with no one to care for me, feeling that I didn’t matter to anyone... Sometimes it’s just a lark and he only wants to flirt for a bit; sometimes it goes farther. I usually land home ten shillings to the good. But it isn’t only the money. It’s meeting different people, and hearing them talk and being made to feel that you matter to them” (Chesterton 1928: 155-156).

In London, as in other large urban centres, scores of young women came from the provinces in search of employment. High expectations of a better way of life were often dashed when, for example, work could not be found, wages were not suffice to meet the higher costs of living, and the isolation associated with being in unfamiliar surroundings and without the support of friends and family took hold. As noted in *The Athenaeum*, it was no coincidence that “...the trades in which good wages are earned contribute generally to the lowest percentage of prostitutes” (1918: 377). It was also no coincidence that the industries in which women were susceptible to low wages, long hours, poor working conditions and loneliness that the largest numbers of prostitutes were recruited from. Domestic service was commonly recognised as the trade which provided the highest rates of prostitutes, and this is something which I examine in the context of Liverpool in chapter eight. For

some commentators, the links between prostitution and domestic service worked to negate associations of it as an act engaged with out of economic need, because domestic service remained throughout the period an industry where demand always outweighed supply. The poor conditions and emotional difficulties which accompanied such work were regularly overshadowed by the notion that any employment was better than none. Yet for many girls prostitution was anticipated as the means through which this set of complaints could be remedied, with higher rates of pay, social interaction with clients and support networks with other prostitutes, choice of workplace and hours, excitement, variation and freedom from employers. Although, in reality, the original grievances that were sought to be relieved through prostitution were frequently reencountered in other forms, such as, dangerous working conditions, irregular pay, oppression by pimps, procurers and other prostitutes, and the experience of further social exclusion.

During the 1930s, the Traffic in Women and Children branch of the League of Nations carried out a series of international enquiries into the rehabilitation of prostitutes. In 1936, the Committee reconvened for the second stage of this investigation, from which they produced the *Report on Enquiry into Measures of Rehabilitation of Adult Prostitutes* (League of Nations 1939). Based on the responses they had received from voluntary organisations across the United Kingdom in 1935, the report concluded that “the chief difficulties experienced in the rehabilitation of adult women who have taken to a life of prostitution may be summed up as being social, economic and personal” (TNA PCOM/9/141/1931-39). The problem of low wages within the formal labour market were recognised as a key obstacle in securing women’s movement away from prostitution; “it is difficult to offer the type of women under consideration any employment which will seem to her as easy and well paid ... than the life she is asked to leave” (ibid 1931-39). In this sense, low wages were viewed as responsible for both propelling a woman’s entry into prostitution and for hampering her departure away from it, a condition described in *The Athenaeum* as “the vicious circle of prostitution” (1918: 379).

However, such opinions which positioned prostitution as a response to structural feminine poverty were by no means illustrative of the route interwar prescriptions followed. As Chesterton

observed in her 1928 social exploration, *Women of the Underworld*, “it is curious that while the psychology of crime invariably excites interest and sympathy, the causes of prostitution – economic and psychological – are less seldom tolerantly considered” (Chesterton 1928: 167). Certainly, as I explore in the context of interwar Liverpool in section three, so rarely was the economic connection made by those who regulated, judged and reformed prostitutes that the silence could be deafening. Others, however, did consider the economic causes of prostitution, but in doing so rejected its influence in shaping women’s entry into prostitution. Indeed, in 1932 Hall argued – ironically in the worst year of the depression – that in Britain, “as a direct cause of prostitution poverty appears to be a diminishing factor” (Hall 1932: 111). The following statements all provided a similar sentiment:

“I can say that in my experience I have never come across a prostitute in this country (England) who could be said to have been driven to that life through low wages.” [Unknown source]

“It is the exception to find a woman who has been driven to immoral earnings by financial need.” [Miss Spens, St. Thomas’s Hospital V.D. Clinic, ‘An Almoner’s Work in a Women’s V.D. Clinic’, p.11]

“We gradually came to the conclusion that the essential cause of prostitution is not economic, as might at first be thought, but essentially moral, social and individual.” [International Union of Catholic Women’s Associations]

“Most recruits come from trades where unemployment is rare and many have left jobs which could be considered at least tolerable by other girls.” [ London County Council, *Report on Common Lodging Houses*, 1927, p.12. ]

Of course, it is important to consider the spaces from which such claims were being forwarded. Inferably, these responses were made in light of their contact with the prostitute at a particularly low point in her life, for example in the venereal disease clinic or when she was in receipt of some



form of assistance from religious charities. Also, such sentiments were probably made in reference to women who had spent a substantial period as prostitutes (given that they were now under the attention of such organisations) - rather than the part-time or casual prostitute - and perhaps the original cause of their prostitution had been obscured or become irrelevant by this stage. As one observer noted, these inquiries were inferably based upon “those who have failed even in this profession, and have come under the care of an institution of some kind” (*The Athenaeum*, 1918: 377). Nevertheless, the idea of culpability is firmly rooted with the prostitute rather than her economic history and exposure to poverty. Interestingly, this notion that “prostitution is not an economic question” was not only projected by those who regulated, reformed and rescued prostitutes, but was at times also seemingly endorsed by prostitutes themselves (Royden ed., 1916: 139). Of the 669 cases from the *DP* sample, only 3 women – or 0.44% - stated ‘low wages in former employment’ as the motivation behind their engagement with prostitution, with just 29 or 4.33% citing ‘out of work’(ibid: 190-191). However, the issue of methodology – specifically with regards to the degree of overlap between many of the categories – does call into question the conclusiveness of these figures. So, for example, other categories including ‘deserted by husband’, ‘left widow and destitute’, and ‘husband out of work’, may all denote a particular situation which women associated with their entry into prostitution. Although, it is fair to assume that for many of these women it would have been the economic difficulties they experienced as a consequence of these events that actually prompted their movement into prostitution. In fact, it is possible to identify no less than 20 out of the 43 stated categories as either being based upon economic need or as referring to incidences where economic pressures may be incited (see Table 1). Looked at in this way, it can be argued that up to 34.5% of the sample had understood their original involvement in prostitution as being influenced (either exclusively or partially) by economic difficulties. Indeed, the authors of *DP* were astutely self-reflective of the limitations of their methodology, and issued a note of caution to those who read such low percentages as ‘evidence’ that poverty plays no part in prostitution. Firstly, they suggested that there is a problem of poverty being naturalised amongst the class from which the majority of prostitutes came; “the class from which she is most likely to come regards poverty as a fish might regard the sea in which it swims; it seems the natural element in which all life is supported” (ibid: 169). Secondly, there was an issue of interpreting and defining

such crude terms as “low wages” and “economic pressure” (ibid: 139). Together, these problems of remembering, understanding and positioning one’s ‘cause/s’ within the context of their own situation and against the wider social and economic spectrum, are likely to have reduced both personal and ‘expert’ associations between poverty and prostitution. Nevertheless, even after these issues of interpretation are accounted for (as much as is possible to do so), the numbers remain relatively low, and the ‘link’ was to become further obscured as discourses of prostitution came to increasingly focus upon the amateur during the interwar years. In this climate the distinction between economic need and want was to be clearly defined and articulated, but also conveniently blurred.

#### **(4:3) Luxuries and individual greed?**

“There are little girl typists earning from 16s. to 30s. a week, who dress in chiffon blouses costing 20s. and wear jewellery galore, because no one points out the necessity of saving or the unsuitability of accepting presents from men to whom they are not engaged – extravagance is silly. Why should factory girls buy silk stockings and fur coats? Both are utterly out of place in a factory, just as much out of place as diamond tiaras...Women in hundreds of thousands are doing superbly, but the tens are being tempted by gold and glitter.” [Mrs. Alec-Tweedie, *Martial Law and Women*, 1917].

The advances in employment opportunities opened up to women during the war, and in particular, the higher wage rates they could subsequently command, became a site of intense unease for many observers towards the end of the war. Concerns centred on the perception that a body of young women were increasingly fixated upon their individual rights and newfound freedoms rather than focussing on their duty and role within the war effort. More alarming were the young girls who discovered alternative means to overcome the fact that their wages could not permit them to share in the consumerist pleasures and entertainment spaces which many of their female counterparts were now enjoying. For the travel writer and social commentator Mrs Alec-Tweedie, this engagement in promiscuous sexual relations outside the realm of marriage for the purpose of ‘trivial’ and ‘garish’ luxuries was not just a disturbing symbol of female self-indulgence and delusion, but an insult to the body of “disciplined, punctual, sober, clean and obedient” men who

were sacrificing their lives on the frontlines (Mrs. Alec-Tweedie 1917:159). As conceptualisations of the amateur survived into and flourished during the interwar period, such discourses which positioned prostitution as an act motivated out of individual greed rather than economic need gained increasing currency.

In her social survey, Hall claimed that her fieldwork had returned no evidence to suggest “that women supplement, by prostitution earnings, wages insufficient to maintain them” (Hall 1932: 114). What it had revealed, however, was “ample evidence that one or both forms of promiscuity are practiced to supply what the witnesses describe as ‘luxuries’ (ibid: 114). Of course, although ‘luxuries’ is in itself a relative concept, in terms of amateur prostitution it was understood to typically refer to the acquisition of “dress, drink, dainties, and gay times” (ibid: 114). It was evident that Chesterton, who had a fairly sympathetic view towards women who engaged in part-time prostitution as a way of supplementing low wages, had little time for the amateur prostitute who “exploits sex in the matter of promise and denies it in the question of fulfilment” (Chesterton 1928: 157-158). For Chesterton, girls who “make a habit of teasing” were particularly troublesome, because not only did they refuse both conventional work and to walk the streets as the professional did, but they were duping men by “sailing under false colours” (ibid: 157-158). The professional who engaged in sexual relations could therefore be regarded as more moral than the amateur who merely implied sexual relations. They would spend their days “looking at the shops, going to the cinemas, keeping themselves extraordinarily smart and neat” (ibid: 158). By night, they would find men who were prepared to buy them treats or give them a little cash, as one girl recalled:

“My friend and I always go together. We hop into a car and usually the driver has a friend with him, too. We generally pal up with boys our own age, and we go off for a run to Richmond or Hampstead Heath. We have a bit of a lark, but nothing really wrong. Sometimes they try it on, but we always say we’re not that sort and they generally buy us some sweets and we usually wangle five bob a piece. Of course we kiss and cuddle, but neither of us want a baby so we don’t let it get to that” (ibid: 158-159).

In this sense, the amateur did not exclusively refer to girls who actually had sexual relations with men. If categorising the amateur who had sexual encounters alongside the prostitute was fairly

tenuous, then including the amateur who did not have sex within this category was positively shaky. However, as I examine in chapter five, blurring the amateur and the professional was not just a habit of social commentators but was also seized upon as a powerful and convenient tool in the extending of legislative powers to regulate not only the ‘criminality’ of the professional, but the ‘immorality’ of the amateur as well.

In *DP*, 29 participants (4.33%) ascribed ‘vanity, love of pleasures, adventure’ as the reason behind their original entry into prostitution. However, the authors of this study also included ‘adventurous spirit’, ‘bad companions’, ‘a wilful and uncontrollable nature’, ‘laziness’, ‘love of sweets’ and ‘the obligation to pay debts’ within this category which they named ‘deliberate choice’, taking the total up to 23.7%. The investigators reported a range of cases, including that of I.G. who at fourteen would “stay away from home for nights together, selling herself to boys for pence until she had got together enough money to indulge her passion for sweets,” and P.K. who was “found by an acquaintance in a brothel where she gone to obtain money for the payment of her bridge debts” (Royden ed., 1916: 42). However, the findings showed that typically it was the “desire for good clothes and finery which above all else makes the life of prostitution attractive to girls from the poorer classes” (ibid: 46). The case of K.O. was fairly typical:

“She has been a factory hand at Reading and a domestic servant. She was sexually lax through want of self-control, and while in domestic service she stole. She came into the life of prostitution at twenty-one, through her love of finery and her dislike of domestic work. She left her situation of her own accord, and went to lodge in a house of doubtful reputation in Tottenham” (ibid: 49).

Unlike Tweedie, Hall and Chesterton who showed obvious contempt towards girls who sold their bodies for these purposes, in *DP* it was recognised that such items “add an element of interest and variety to the personality and it gives an opportunity for gratifying the love of form and colour” (ibid: 48). It was seen to be a natural feminine desire to want to command respect through physical appearance, although perhaps unsurprisingly they did not go so far as to advocate achieving this through disreputable means.

By concentrating on her preference for consumer goods and entertainment, commentators were able to construct the amateur as a figure who not only epitomised the dangers associated with prostitution *per se*, but who also became a symbol of the perils associated with consumerism, modernity and Americanisation. Even after the armistice the human devastation of the war was referenced in attempts to restrain what was perceived to be a depraved generation of young men and women hell bent on enjoying the social freedoms of this ‘modern’ world. The journalist Hannen Swaffer was particularly aghast at what he called the “unbridled decadence” of those who frequented West End nightclubs, arguing that “this is not the sort of freedom for which nearly a million British soldiers died for” (*The People*, 8 February 1925). Outside of London’s West End, it was not within the nightclub but rather the new sexual geographies of the dancehall and cinema where the behaviour of young women was seen to be particularly problematic. To many observers these spaces operated to both facilitate and promote sexual immorality, and even pave the way to a life of prostitution. On the one hand, there were concerns that girls were engaging in prostitution to gain access to these leisure spheres, such as the case of Y.B. who “became dishonest in order to get money for cinematograph shows, and from the age of fourteen would have sexual relations with any boy who would treat her to these shows. At sixteen she became a prostitute” (Royden ed., 1916: 42). Once inside and away from the glare of adults, it was also feared that youngsters capitalised on the dark of the cinema or the crowd of the dancehall to meet members of the opposite sex and possibly engage in sexual relations. The uses made of the cinema by W.D. do suggest that some girls did view the cinema as a way of establishing casual sexual relations with boys; “she took first to going to the cinematograph shows with other girls, and then she took to going with boys. Again and again she had sexual relations with them, till the age of fifteen she was sent to a Rescue Home” (ibid: 41). For the majority, however, the cinema and dancehall represented a new source of freedom and respite from the trappings of daily life. As Gillis has argued, these new accessible heterosocial sites opened up to the young during this period culminated in what he terms the ‘ritualisation of courtship’ whereby relationships established in these spaces were more likely to lead to marriage rather than moral corruption (Gillis 1985: chapter eight).

Yet, concerns focussed not just on the behaviour of girls within the cinema but also on what impact the films they were exposed to were having upon their future behaviours. As Nava and O'Shea have noted, the cinema gave women access to "new representations of femininity" (Nava and O'Shea 1996: 3). Dangers associated with these representations were believed to be two-fold. Firstly, glamorous Hollywood starlets dressed in high-fashion clothing, adorned in cosmetics and living a life of independence represented a type of femininity which could not have been more at odds with traditional ideals of the woman as mother and wife which were understood as central to the process of reconstruction. Secondly, there was the risk that girls would use these visual references of glamour and seek to emulate and imitate them, an inclination which required money. It was no coincidence that at a time when 23,000,000 cinema tickets were sold every week that commentators drew parallels with prostitution and feminine fashion; "one of the strongest influences that attract a girl to prostitution is the love of dress" (Royden ed., 1916: 175). Perhaps more alarming than the allure of glamour was the belief that the cinema functioned as a space in which audiences were being educated in promiscuity. In 1927, the Bishop of Southwell articulated this concern when he warned that those who regularly attended the cinema are in "danger of coming to take the view that irregular sex relationships or more or less the normal thing" (*Liverpool Echo*, 21 February 1927). In a climate where the concept of Americanization was seized upon as a means of positioning consumerist 'greed' and 'vulgarity' as wholly un-British, American film was pinpointed as particularly conducive to the promotion of sexual immorality. One member of the public was so perturbed by this they were mobilised to write to the Editor of the London magazine, *The Bookman*:

"Prostitution and adultery are now shamelessly portrayed as normal and even attractive ways of living, though this, it should be noted, is almost wholly limited to American films... The wife is always dull, narrow-minded, unlovable – the 'other woman' everything that is admirable and adorable" (Gibbs 1934: 201).

This interwar belief that sexual deviancy could be learnt through exposure to inappropriate representations evokes striking parallels with the Victorian preoccupation over ‘moral miasma’, which Elizabeth Wilson has drawn attention to in *The Sphinx in the City* (Wilson 1991: 39). According to Victorian reformers, observing depravity in the streets was enough to corrupt those of weak dispositions, be it in reference to men succumbing to the temptation of a prostitute’s advances, or in terms of young women being enticed into a life of prostitution through their social interactions with women who had already ‘fallen’. By the interwar period, it was clear that the scope for moral contagion was expanding. If the police were able to enforce policies which attempted to keep a city’s main thoroughfares free from visible immorality, then they were powerless to monitor what kind of films, plays and literature the public were consuming. When in 1938 under the pseudonym of Shelia Cousins, a London prostitute published her memoirs, *To Beg I Am Ashamed*, both the *Daily Mirror*’s reviewer Cyril James and the editor were so outraged by “this harmful book” that they printed the review five days early out of fear that Monday – the conventional slot for book reviews and also the day the book went on sale – “will be too late” (*DM* 31/3/1938; see also, Slater 2007: 155). The main objection – although there were many – was that “this book shows only the glamour and none of the real horror of the vilest trade of all” (*ibid*: 31/3/1938). James carefully selected excerpts which laboured the sentiment that Cousin’s presented the life of a prostitute more akin to that of an actress or Lady rather than of “a creature of the back streets:”

“I ran Freddie up an immense bill” she writes. “Every morning I had a pound of strawberries for breakfast and they were out of season... I rarely travelled anywhere except in a taxi and I often kept it waiting for an hour at a time... We took to starting the day with a bottle of champagne at eleven... I went out with him three or four times a week and he would buy me clothes, pay my rent and give me pocket-money. One day alone he came up to the flat with £30 to give me a new evening dress” (*ibid*: 31/3/1938).

Once again, the notion that the ‘deviant’ woman was prospering over the ‘honest’ woman in a way which positioned prostitution as alluring and exciting deeply troubled James. The real “tragedy”

here, James concluded, “is that there are decent girls who, dispirited by the hard fight for existence which great cities impose on workers, wonder wistfully whether it would be worth exchanging their honour for a life of luxury” (ibid: 31/3/1938).

Although many commentators voiced unease about young women entering amateur prostitution as a way to achieve these feminine commodities, it was interestingly this participation in such conventional activities as going to the cinema or saving for a blouse, that made the amateur both in her aesthetic form and in terms of her social aspirations and leisure interests, almost indistinguishable from other females. Given that this coincided with a transformation in the physicality of the professional, for many observers the conduit between prostitution, promiscuity and hegemonic femininity had never been so slight. Indeed, this was a problem of distinction experienced by men who used the services of prostitutes themselves, and invariably compromised the safety of amateurs who were just ‘out for a good time.’ One such man relayed the difficulties of this situation to Chesterton:

“In the old days you knew where you were by a girl’s make-up, but now all of them seem to look the same. You can walk down Oxford Street from the Circus to Marble Arch, and get the glad eye from most girls. But looking won’t tell you whether they’re out for a lark or whether they are ready to go the whole way, on a cash basis or without. Ten to one if you speak to a girl, although she’s given you the glad, she doesn’t mean business and you get bally left unless you’re pretty crude and make your purpose clearly understood at the beginning. There doesn’t seem any clear dividing line” (Chesterton 1928: 161).

As perceptions of prostitution altered in the interwar period, and increasing attention was placed upon the amateur, the idea of being paid in the form of gifts and outings perturbed commentators in the sense that for the first time prostitution could be utilised as a gateway to a higher level of femininity and social mobility, two concepts which were worlds apart from the Victorian image of the prostitute as unfeminine and socially ostracised. As Clement has asserted in relation to the ‘amateur’s’ American equivalent – the ‘charity girl’ – the emergence of this figure, “opened up



space between chastity and prostitution, which both changed understandings of sexual morality and affected sexual behaviour” (Clement 2006: 211). In the context of interwar Britain, the amateur came to represent a grey area somewhere between hegemonic and subordinate femininity, engaging in behaviours associated with the underworld in the new sexual geographies of the overworld, and in doing so undermining the durability and rigidity of the social, cultural and legal parameters of deviance and respectability.

#### **(4:4) Prostitution, ‘white slavery’ and foreignness**

If the interwar fascination with the amateur had worked to intensify the deviancy of the prostitute by focussing upon her greed and want, then concerns over white slavery proved to have the opposite effect by constructing prostitutes as the victims of greedy and predatory males. Narratives of white slavery had appeared periodically since the 1870s and 1880s, when reformers had first drawn attention to the small-scale trafficking of British women to licensed brothels on the continent (see Walkowitz 1980: 123-135; Gorham 1978: 353-369; Walkowitz 1980: 246-252). As Bland and Bartley have both pointed out there was a certain degree of power associated with the use of a term which evoked inevitable parallels with the plight of pre-emancipated black slaves (Bland 2002: 297; Bartley 2000: 170). There were also certain advantages to be made from the fact that the concept of ‘white slavery’ was never clearly defined. From the late nineteenth century onwards various usages – some with honest intentions, others with more dubious foundations – were made of white slavery by an equally diverse range of organisations and individuals. So, for example, representations of white slavery included cautionary tales forwarded by feminist, rescue and vigilance associations of British women unwittingly being lured into prostitution by foreign men who transported them to faraway destinations, and likewise, of foreign women being enticed to Britain under false pretences and/or finding themselves particularly susceptible to a life of prostitution following their arrival. Fuelled by late-nineteenth century concerns over the welfare of children and the recently conceptualised period of adolescence, social purists and feminists also used white slavery in order to speak out against child prostitution in British cities and the iniquities of intergenerational sex (see Gorham 1978: 353-369; Cox 2003; Brown and Barrett 2002). For other social commentators white slavery became a convenient means through which to express,

stoke and construct anxieties over a perceived influx of foreigners into Britain. It was no coincidence that stories of foreign men procuring and profiting from the sexual exploitation of women in British ports and cities played such a strong part in the 'racialisation of crime' at the very moments the arrival of immigrants was understood to be particularly high (see Knepper 2007: 61-79).

However, by 1927, the League of Nations Report on Traffic in Women and Children concluded:

“At the present there is no evidence of any traffic in women or children between Great Britain and any foreign country... For many years there has been no evidence of any recruiting of women or girls in this country for prostitution abroad. Enquiries in other countries bear out the fact that very few English women are practicing prostitution abroad” (LRO 365/WOM/22/2/1927).

Indeed, the independent suffragette and writer Teresa Billington-Creig had come to a similar conclusion when some 15 years previously amidst the introduction of the CLA (1912) she carried out an investigation into “The Truth About White Slavery” (Billington-Creig 1913: 428-446). Troubled by the fact that tales of white slavery had been “all offered second or third hand,” and that they had never been challenged but rather “repeated with emphasis,” Billington-Creig sent questionnaires out to various social purity, rescue and religious organisations, chief constables, police court missionaries, magistrates and white slavery campaigners, in the quest to uncover the facts behind the furore (ibid: 431). Her findings which were published the following year in the *English Review* were fairly conclusive; “none of these stories could be substantiated” (ibid: 431). Even the Assistant Commissioner for the Central Authority in England for the Repression of the White Slave Traffic stated:

“I cannot call to mind a single case of the forcible trapping of a girl or a woman by drugs, false messages, or physical force during the last ten years that has been authenticated or proved. I should say that such cases were very rare indeed...” (ibid: 439).

The statistical evidence did show that there were some cases of procurement beyond the timeframe and geographies examined by Billington-Creig, but within England and Wales between 1900 and 1934 the trial rates had been consistently low, totalling at just 82 cases. Unsurprisingly, the number of proceedings peaked during the period immediately prior to and following the introduction of the CLA of 1912 with 34 cases between 1910 and 1914 compared to just 8 between 1905 and 1909 and 9 between 1915 and 1919, a pattern which no doubt in part reflected the police's desire to gain public confidence that they were dealing with the 'problem'. There was also a slight increase from the early 1930s as the number of cases rose from 5 for the period 1925 to 1929 to 12 for the period 1930 to 1934, perhaps an indication that in the midst of economic depression procurement became an increasingly viable means of navigating times of financial difficulty.<sup>1</sup> Of course, what these statistics cannot tell us is whether claims that procurement was an offence largely carried out by foreign men held any quantitative weight. In spite of the evidence – or rather lack of it – and the general consensus that anxieties had peaked in 1912, narratives of white slavery did intermittently appear during the interwar period. There were a few tales of international trafficking, such as Cecil Bishop's claim that English women were being trafficked to South America under the guise of joining dancing troupes "never to return to England" (*The Saturday Review*, 2 January 1932). Similarly, a *Daily Mirror* expose from 1936, entitled, "The Greatest Evil of Our Day" claimed that scores of English dancers could be found in Parisian nightclubs, where more often than not they "fall into the hands of White Slavers" (*Daily Mirror*, 17 February 1938). However, in Liverpool, the most prevalent stories were those which focussed upon the corruption of white women on British soil by foreign men, particularly black and Chinese sailors, as well as the overrepresentation of women in the trade from particular ethnic groups and countries, as examined in chapters five, six and eight.

#### **(4:5) Prostitution and sexual inclination**

After surveying some of the key causes associated with women's movement into prostitution, Hall

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<sup>1</sup> These figures are based upon the statistics presented in the annual Parliamentary publication, *Criminal Statistics for England and Wales: Statistics relating to Crime, Criminal Proceedings and Coroners' Investigations*.

came to the conclusion, that, “prostitution is primarily a sex problem” (Hall 1932: 19). Traditionally, such conceptualisations had centred on the idea that prostitution existed because of “the overwhelming male need to exercise, for his health’s sake, the sex function” (ibid: 129). Whilst it was believed that ‘biologically’ women did not possess such sexual desires, it was recognised that there was always going to be a cohort of women ready to capitalise on the male demand for sex. The early-to-mid nineteenth century interest in sexology – the ‘science of sexuality’ – had worked to, as Bland suggests, create a “dichotomy between the sexes which neatly reflected conventional assumptions concerning male rationality, individuality and assertiveness, female intuition, altruism and passivity” (Bland 1998: 12). Geddes and Thomson’s 1889 publication, *The Evolution of Sex*, focused on the ‘sex difference’ between men and women, just as Darwin had done so in 1871. However, rather than viewing, as Darwin had, that sex differences were fashioned in response to methods of evolutionary survival – in which the male had surpassed the female in both ‘natural’ and ‘sexual selection’ – Geddes and Thomson argued that this distinction had been “decided in the lowest forms of life” (Weeks 1981: 146; see also, Bland 1998: 11-12 and 14-17). It was a question of biological difference, specifically the variant in cell metabolism rates between the sperm (katabolic) and ovum (anabolic), which manifested in males as “more active, eager, passionate, and variable,” and in females as “more passive, conservative, sluggish and stable” (Bland 1998: 16). As a theory rooted in scientific ‘fact’, ‘sex difference’ was difficult to refute. As Geddes and Thomson themselves postulated, “what was decided among the prehistoric Protozoa cannot be annulled by Act of Parliament” (ibid: 14). Certainly, sexological theorising both consciously and sub-consciously informed early-twentieth century attitudes towards prostitution, and as I argue, was interchangeably utilised as a means of condemning and absolving the guilt of prostitutes.

As Hall noted, in spite of the fact that prostitution was regarded as “socially necessary” in order to meet the innate sexual desires of men, women who engaged in prostitution were curiously classed as “social offenders” (Hall 1932: 129). Perhaps unsurprisingly, as sexology began to gain ground beyond the medical and scientific domains from 1914, and Victorian discourses of female sexual passivity were increasingly contested during the interwar period, the prostitute found herself

to be further castigated. As Odem has argued in the context of early-twentieth century America, when understandings of passivity subsided, women could no longer be recognised simply as the victims of male desire (Odem 1995). Instead, “social scientists and professionals reconceptualised the sexual behaviour of unmarried women, focussing agency, and thus blame, on the young women themselves” (ibid: 480).

For many commentators there was no greater deviance than that of the girl who engaged in prostitution out of sexual desire. The anomaly here, of course, was that as an act prostitution existed in response to the male demand for pre-marital and extra-marital sex. In interwar Britain, at the very time sexual advice literature was advocating the benefits of a “vigorous and harmonious sex life” within the bounds of marriage, women who acted upon their sexual impulses outside of marriage were subjected to increasing social and legal judgments (Stopes 1918: 14). This was a position of hypocrisy not lost on Chesterton, who complained that “the girl who sells her body as apart from the girl who gives her body, arouses an active revulsion among a considerable section of women, who at the same time recognise the doctrine of free love” (Chesterton 1928: 167). Yet, as Bland has observed, in reality the popularisation of sexual marital advice literature during the period served to propagate rather than negate “a rather narrow and oppressive view of heterosexual relations” (Bland 1998: 13). Thus, in a climate where reconstruction was framed in the language of the domestic, and solace was to be sought within the heterosexual institution of marriage, women who failed to subscribe to these ideals by participating in pre-marital sex – or even just innocent courtship rituals in public spaces – ran a grave risk of being classified as prostitutes. Indeed, the prostitute surveys conducted in *DP*, indicated that ‘sexual inclination’ stood as the third most common cause for women entering prostitution, accounting for 14.65 % of the sample. However, by their own admissions, the authors acknowledged that in many of these cases where women had been “impelled to become prostitutes by their strong sexual appetites,” there was no money – or other reward – exacted from the men for their services, and thus, “technically” these women were not prostitutes (Royden ed., 1916: 132). Yet, the contempt they held for the behaviour of these girls clearly overrode any sense of duty they had to methodological accuracy. They rationalised their decision to classify such women as prostitutes by arguing that the relationship they have with men

is “the same irresponsible and temporary relationship as that between prostitute and client,” carries the “same physical and mental effects,” and more often than not these women will eventually become prostitutes in the “technical sense of the word” (ibid: 132). If rescue and social workers were guilty of retrospectively blurring the actions of the promiscuous and sexually curious woman with the prostitute, then perhaps more disturbing were the policies of front-line agencies who failed – or simply refused – to make distinctions between prostitution and other forms of feminine sexual behaviour. For example, in his oral history of the British experience of sex in the first half of the twentieth century, Humphries drew attention to the potentially devastating impact such erroneous interventions could have upon a woman’s life. Bill Phillips’ recollection of a near encounter with a women’s police patrol whilst courting a girl on a street in 1920s London is particularly poignant:

“I was in a doorway once and a policewoman came past, well we looked out for them, and I saw her coming and we had to run. Mind you if they caught you, they took you to the police station and they would class her as a prostitute, though she wasn’t a prostitute. They would class her as a prostitute if she was caught having sex in the street. Then once they were branded prostitutes they’d always be a prostitute” (Humphries 1988: 30).

As I explore in chapter five, the dichotomy between female sexual immorality and criminality in interwar Liverpool was often so conveniently ambiguous that the police even made attempts at using their legislative powers to control moral transgressions. However, other commentators took pity on those women who were drawn into prostitution because the nature of their employment – particularly domestic service – or simply bad luck meant that they had not been able to find a potential husband. In fact, Chesterton had come across examples where for some women who had been motivated out of “sheer sex hunger,” prostitution provided their access to marriage (Chesterton 1928: 159). The case of a “red-headed wench” who had worked for several years as a cook for a maiden lady, and engaged in part-time prostitution, was described by Chesterton, not as a “victim of masculine desire, but a willing participant in a casual relationship.”

“There are times when I feel I must have a man, if it’s only to say he loves me... I’ll meet someone who’ll make a fuss of me and we’ll go off to Hampstead or the woods and the mischief’s done. I don’t mean any harm, you know, I’m made that way, that’s all” (ibid: 169).

This woman’s story ended well, when, in a “fortunate meeting in her last adventure” she found a man who asked her to marry him and leave her experiences with prostitution behind her (ibid: 170). For other women, however, when their sexual desires were not matched by sexual knowledge and/or access to contraceptive provisions, the consequences could be both personally dangerous and socially corrosive.

The sexualisation of the prostitute at this juncture was not just symptomatic of the resurgence in sexological-rooted literature or the perceived move towards amateur prostitution, but was also highly indicative of a parallel resurgence in eugenic theory and the emergence of psychoanalysis which together propagated representations of the prostitute as feeble-minded. If, as Bartley’s study of the reformatory sphere has suggested, late Victorian associations between feeble-mindedness and prostitution centred upon the idea that feeble-minded women were “particularly open to seduction since they were too intellectually challenged to put up any resistance to the demands of unprincipled men,” then by the early twentieth century conceptualisations had shifted significantly to position such women as sexually predatory and promiscuous (Bartley 2000: 14-15). As the seduction theory subsided and blame was refocused upon the woman a powerful theory emerged which worked to intensify the ‘danger’ of ‘feeble-minded’ prostitutes. Indeed, the Royal Commission on the Feeble-minded (1908) and the Mental Deficiency Act (1913) had worked to focus and then disseminate associations between the societal problem of prostitution and individual problems of the mind. Firstly, it was widely believed that the “sexual inclinations” of feeble-minded women were “abnormally strong” (Royden ed., 1916: 125). The problem is, that such statements were frequently rooted in the fact that feeble-minded prostitutes were more likely to be referred to institutions than the prostitute population *per se*, and it was investigations carried out upon ‘captive’ groups from which such assumptions were formed. Eugenic concerns which had exacerbated during the Great War worked to compound the danger of the feeble-minded prostitute

in the aftermath. As eugenic and sexological theory collided in the interwar period, a powerful discourse emerged which positioned the feeble-minded prostitute as not only highly sexualised but also “notoriously fertile” (ibid: 131). Indeed, in his *Social Survey*, Caradog Jones placed a premium upon carefully delineating the link between feeble-mindedness, prostitution and illegitimacy:

“A woman, continually in and out of prison as a common prostitute, has four living illegitimate children, all by different fathers. Two are mentally defective and in institutions, while the other two are in ‘homes’” (Jones 1934: 443).

“A woman who had had several illegitimate children was convicted of soliciting, found to be feeble-minded, and sent to an institution. Her father, an alcoholic, died insane in a Poor Law Institution, where her mother is still living as a senile paralytic. A brother is said to be mentally unstable and was before the Court for assaulting his wife but was discharged” (ibid: 441).

Evidently, his concerns were not only based upon the belief that feeble-minded prostitutes are likely to produce illegitimate children but that these children could also have mental defects. This was the cycle of deviance which guided eugenic thinking; the problem was rooted in genetics and manifested itself in social deviance, which in turn perpetuated genetic abnormalities. Tellingly, one of the appendices circulated at the SOC’s first sittings collated the illegitimacy rates in England and Wales against the rates of prostitution convictions. At this moment, the individual behaviour of the prostitute was inextricably linked to larger questions regarding the physical and moral health of the nation. As Humphries has said, the prostitute was frequently seen “to be putting the very future of the British race at risk” (Humphries 1988: 87). It is the purpose of the following sections to explore exactly how these representations and discourses played out in local context in relation to the regulation of prostitution and prostitute experiences.



# **Section Three: Regulation**

“The first Intent of Laws  
Was to correct the Effect and check the Cause;  
And all the Ends of Punishment  
Were only future mischiefs [sic] to prevent.”  
[From Defoe’s ‘Hymn to the Pillory’ (1703)].

### **(5:0) Introduction**

When in 1926, the eminent Sir William Nott-Bower came to reflect upon his time as CC of Liverpool during the 1880s and 1890s, he recalled how “two terrible evils” had caused him “more anxiety and more trouble than anything in connection with my work in Liverpool” (Nott-Bower 1926: 133). The first was concerned with “drunkenness and the administration of the Licensing Laws” (ibid: 133). The second was the question of “immorality, and the dealing with immoral houses,” immorality, of course, being that euphemism which as Pheterson notes “referred especially to prostitution” (Pheterson 1996: 10). Some three decades later, in the shadow of the Great War, CC Francis Caldwell noted in his annual report to Liverpool’s Watch Committee two areas of public disorder which had proved particularly taxing upon police resources in 1918. Once again, the “pernicious habit of methylated spirit drinking” and the “state of the streets...with regard to immorality” – matters understood to be interlinked – had been identified as key areas of concern (LRO H352/2/WAT/1918). However, by 1928, Caldwell’s successor Lionel Everett was keen to articulate – on the national stage by way of the SOC and locally via his annual reports – that Liverpool was a city in control:

“It is satisfactory to know that these offences are markedly on the decrease, and ... the state of the streets in Liverpool, considering its mixed population and position as a leading port, is noticeably clean” (ibid: 1928).

Certainly, the statistical returns for prostitution offences corroborated this view. Between 1918 and 1927 proceedings for solicitation fell by 67%, whilst brothel offences fell by 27%. It was the period following 1927, however, which witnessed the most phenomenal about-turn in Liverpool’s prostitution statistics, with offences for soliciting and brothel-keeping both consistently falling below the rate of 10 per year in the mid-to-late 1930s. Although, this is not to claim that Liverpool

was exceptional in terms of diminished offence rates, after all the statistics showed that nationally solicitation rates in the interwar period were consistently lower than pre-war levels (see Graph 1). What was exceptional in Liverpool was the scale of decline. During the period 1919 to 1936 proceedings for solicitation fell by 98% in Liverpool whilst they fell by 29% nationally.<sup>1</sup>

Just as section two sought to illustrate how in the face of encouraging statistics prostitution was identified as a site of intense unease – in terms of its existence and its regulation – this section argues that the experience of front-line policing was frequently governed by the same paradoxical condition. If the statistics succeeded in projecting an image of a city moving away from its nineteenth century epithet as “the capital of prostitution in Victorian England,” then they failed in both fully supplanting the concerns of the regulators and in reflecting the situation on the streets (Howell *et al* 2008: 235). By surveying the official regulatory responses to prostitution in the street, this chapter seeks to illuminate the highly complex and often contradictory path both prostitution and its control unfolded along in interwar Liverpool.

This chapter follows three main lines of enquiry, although in the interest of coherent structure and given the degree of overlap between them these points are woven throughout rather than forming subsections of their own. Firstly, it is argued that an ‘official policy’ of management and containment was favoured in Liverpool, rather than attempts at outright suppression. A system established in late Victorian Liverpool by Nott-Bower - the “major architect of prostitution policy” – the pragmatic reasoning of its founder continued to underpin the trajectory of policing throughout the interwar period; “Brothels and prostitutes have existed in all ages, and the evils in connection therewith can be checked and moderated, but cannot be *suppressed*” (ibid: 238; Nott-Bower 1926: 141)). If such a strategy implied an acceptance – albeit it a reluctant acceptance – on the part of the regulators that prostitution was inevitable, then conversely it benefited them in two distinct ways. Firstly, it enabled the LCPF to construct and monitor a specific sexual geography of prostitution. Secondly, in a climate where public and political attention increasingly focussed upon the ‘rights’

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<sup>1</sup> These figures are based upon the statistics presented in the annual Parliamentary publication, *Criminal Statistics for England and Wales: Statistics relating to Crime, Criminal Proceedings and Coroners’ Investigations*. Note that calculations have only been made up until 1936 because, as previously noted, from 1937 solicitation and brothel offences appeared as an amalgamated category of crime in Liverpool.

of prostitutes in the wake of a series of policing scandals and high profile inquiries – namely the SOC and RCPPP – it gave them the room to negotiate a balance between maintaining public order and averting encroaching too far upon the civil liberties of prostitutes. After all, prostitution was in this period a legal act; it was the behaviour rather than the existence of prostitutes which could warrant judicial intervention. Although, as we shall see, this was often a difficult balance to strike at a time when appeasing the ratepayer no longer necessarily meant taking proactive measures and the capabilities of policing were complicated by the limits and ambiguities of the law. In order to understand why this line of management and containment was pursued it is necessary to consider the fundamental anticipation of the official regulators, and it is this which concerns the second part of my enquiry.

When Everett sat before the SOC in 1928, he articulated his objections to the current penalties levelled against prostitutes in court, and suggested that compulsory long-term detention within “some sort of institution” would be far more beneficial than referring prostitutes to prison for short periods( TNA HO/326/7/10/1928). The Committee asked whether this was “with the object of reforming them, or abolishing prostitution altogether” (ibid: 1928). Everett’s response was particularly illuminating; “Largely I think it is with the object of removing an evil influence” (ibid: 1928). Regulating prostitution in interwar Liverpool was guided by the desire to rid the *streets* of *visible* immorality. Indeed, the CJS was so preoccupied with the idea of policing prostitution out of visibility that during the 1930s an informal culture of concealment surfaced whereby known prostitutes were increasingly arrested and judged under the pretext of other public disorder offences; a move which calls into question just how far and fast the statistics were actually recovering. However, this was about far more than prostitution upsetting the facade of public order, or the reputation of the LCPF for that matter. Based on nineteenth century anxieties over moral contagion and moral miasma, more crucially prostitution was understood as hazardous to public respectability. The idea that the public required protection from exposure to this form of sexual immorality gained renewed currency in the interwar period, and was in many ways contingent upon broader concerns that society – and in particular women – were becoming too knowledgeable in sexual matters. This chapter argues that efforts to check the prostitute as a source of moral

pollution dictated who exactly was being policed, how they were being policed, where and with what consequences. In this climate a hierarchy of vice emerged whereby the deviance of a prostitute was measured in accordance to how public and identifiable her transgression was as oppose to the actual or potential act of transgression itself. Although, to understand how exactly this hierarchy of vice played out and why it became so paramount to the statistical returns, it is necessary to resist viewing the prostitute as a homogenous category.

The third line of enquiry, therefore, focuses on what the Victorian physician William Acton referred to as the “shades of prostitution” (Acton 1857: 60). By looking at the nuances of prostitution, this chapter argues that the statistics did not necessarily signal improvement *per se*, but rather reflected a series of perceived shifts in the physical, spatial and criminal identity of interwar prostitutes, and thus alterations in the methods and parameters of control. Traditionally, in accordance to the minutiae of the solicitation laws – whereby to arrest a woman for soliciting necessitated proof that she was a common prostitute – the policing of prostitution in Liverpool had focussed upon the professional. Although the term professional was used to refer to both the street-walker and the brothel worker who engaged in prostitution for financial gain, given the preoccupation with visibility and moral contagion it was the street solicitor who had typically proven most problematic for the police and the courts. By the interwar period, alterations in how the professional street-walker looked and where she operated collided with broader technological advances in street lighting and the motorcar to reduce how visible her trade was to the public and thus how much of a concern she was to the police. These changes no doubt played a crucial part in the declining solicitation offence rates, although as I argue in line with the policy of management and containment this testified more to the movement of the trade to less detectable spaces rather than the diminishment of vice as such. And, in spite of the premium the LCPF placed upon the process of ‘professionalization’ the city’s prostitutes were seen to undergo – and the subsequent movement of their trade away from the streets it was seen to facilitate - the evidence from the court registers suggests that this period by no means marked the end of Liverpool’s long association with street prostitution. Behind the smokescreen of statistical improvement, the archetypal habitual street solicitor persisted as a problematic figure for the police and magistrates. However, in spite of

– or perhaps because of – this perceived move towards the professionalization of prostitution, at the very same time police attention turned towards amateur prostitution. As previously indicated, scholars have largely failed or refused to consider the amateur within histories of prostitution. I contend that in order to make sense of why in spite of statistical improvement prostitution remained a source of anxiety it is necessary to listen to rather than ignore these contemporary representations and responses, however uncomfortable they may be. Moreover, by paying attention to the ‘shades’ of prostitution, it becomes evident that in interwar Liverpool the amateur was not just constructed as a prostitute within the popular imagination, but so real and troublesome were her actions perceived to be that the CJS capitalised on the imprecision of the Liverpool Corporation of 1921 in order to legally deal with her. Crucially, arrests made in connection with the amateur under the LCA did not appear within the returns for prostitution offences. Just as chapter three did, this chapter rejects scholarly assumptions that suggest there was a simple dichotomous division between the amateur and the professional, in which the former spoke of the figurative and the latter of the literal. Indeed, it is argued that the complex policy of control played out in the arena of the court which at once was guided by the polarised aims of ‘penal welfarism’ and public protection extended to underpin the responses of the LCPF in the street. Essentially, the police and courts were not only at the fore of policing and judging crime in Liverpool, but were in the front line of policing and judging the individual’s sexual morality. The official regulators both responded to, and consolidated, the expanding parameters of prostitution, and in doing so, they forged a three-tiered approach to policing prostitution which sought to encompass – though not always actively legislate – the ‘professionalised’ professional (the ‘respectable prostitute’) operating away from the streets and brothel worker; the professional street-walker (the ‘hardened offender’); and the amateur (the ‘good-time girl’).

#### **(5:1) The organisation of the LCPF**

Throughout the interwar period the size, composition and conduct of the LCPF remained a constant source of local and national interest. Formed in 1836 following the Municipal Corporations Act (1835), LCPF was the first of the ‘new police’ forces to be created outside of London, and remained for over a century the largest (in terms of man power) and most expensive, with of

course, the exception of the Metropolitan Police (see Klein 2010: 1-10; Brogden 1991: 3; Cockcroft 1991: 3-5; Emsley 2009: 39-66). By the interwar period the LCPF was split into seven divisions which together policed an area of roughly 21,242 acres and a population calculated at 802,940 in 1921 and rising to 856,266 by 1931 (TNA HO/326/8/27/1927-28). Between the wars the strength of the force never fell below the 2,200 mark. Although there was a slight decrease in police numbers between 1931 and 1933 – dropping from 2264 to 2203 – this period witnessed recurring public debate regarding the appropriateness of such a sizeable force in a climate where the City, and many of its citizens, were subjected to intense economic pressures. One resident of Kempston Street – interestingly an area frequently utilised by prostitutes – wrote to the *Liverpool Echo* in September 1931 arguing that at a time when “the country is crying out for economy” there needs to be a review “into the costs of the Liverpool Police Force” (*LE*, 9 September 1931). Similarly, a few months later an article appeared in the *Liverpool Daily Post and Mercury* with the headline “Too Many Police?” (*LDPM*, 9 January 1932). Specifically, grievances were voiced against the ratio of police constables to the population and the number of high ranking posts held within the LCPF, grievances which were aggravated when the situation in Liverpool was compared to that in other cities. Manchester City Police Force – who had “a far larger area to cover” – and Birmingham City Police Force – who had over 100,000 more citizens under their jurisdiction – both had forces with approximately 700 less employees than the LCPF (*LE*, 28 September 1931). Between 1919 and 1939, Liverpool had one police constable to every 472 persons on average, whereas Manchester had one to every 529 persons on average, and Birmingham one to every 588 persons.<sup>2</sup> What had once been heralded by Nott-Bower in late Victorian Liverpool as a “superior system” of policing – in reference to the size of the force - was by the interwar period more likely to incite accusations of a “city over-policed” and out of touch with the economic cuts being made in other front-line services and in the daily lives of Liverpool’s citizens (Nott-Bower 1926: 141; *LDPM*, 9 January 1932). In this climate where the public were granted a greater transparency of policing in Liverpool – by way of newspaper coverage – disquiet over the cost of the LCPF clearly impacted upon public attitudes to policing policies (particularly those which had always proven to

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<sup>2</sup> These are averages for the period based upon data taken from the annual publication, *Police (Counties and Boroughs, England and Wales): Report of His Majesty’s Inspectors of Constabulary*. Please note that the averages given here are based upon the total strength of only the authorised police and does not include additional police strength.

be controversial such as the solicitation laws). As I explore later in this chapter, operating under the constant gaze of the public may have in part led the LCPF to adopt a culture of concealment from the mid-1930s.

Gaining some semblance of the individuals behind the organisation is key to understanding the route the policing of prostitution unfolded along. Through his study of beat policing in interwar Liverpool Brogden has challenged the assumption that the police, and those who worked for it, signified a coercive middle-class institution concerned with imposing their moral values upon the working classes. Brogden argues that the Liverpool experience shows that this process was not so straightforward. One of the greatest paradoxes of beat policing as an instrument concerning “social control of the Liverpool lower classes” was that those on the beat were largely from the same class as those they controlled, and were also subjected to control by their superiors; “policing involved facing both ways” (Brogden 1991: 3 and 1). Additionally, as this chapter goes on to demonstrate, the practicalities of policing and the vagaries of individual constables meant that in reality the regulation of prostitution often veered from the instructions outlined above and the anticipations of the higher ranks, and thus the notion that the LCPF represented a cohesive and comprehensive mechanism of class control is both unrealistic and over-simplistic. Attempts were made by the LCPF to organise specific personnel for the task of policing prostitution. Those ascribed to such duties were to operate under plain clothes, were “usually men of not less than six or seven years service,” had proved themselves to be “reliable” and more crucially were “married” (TNA HO/326/8/26/1927-28). Bound up within these tactics was the notion that the immoral behaviour of the prostitute could corrupt even the most ‘respectable’ members of society such as the police constable. Being married was believed to adequately protect beat officers from falling victim to the lure of prostitute women, although in reality as the section on corruption indicates this was by no means a failsafe plan. Also, in truth, the regular ‘Bobbie’ on the beat would have carried out the vast majority of action (or inaction as the case may be) against prostitutes, and therefore the anticipations of the organisation were again mediated by the practicalities and realities of policing in the street.

#### **(5:2) Policing the ‘professionalized’ professional**



When CC Everett and SM Deacon sat before the SOC on Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> January 1928, a premium was placed upon articulating the colossal reduction there had been in cases of professional prostitution in Liverpool over the course of the early twentieth century. Indeed, the Committee were so impressed with the diminishing offence rates before them that they went as far to “congratulate” Deacon for the “work that is being done”, and deduced that there had been “no difficulty apparently in Liverpool in keeping your streets in good order and decency” (TNA HO/326/7/9/1928). The following Monday the *Post and Mercury* ran an article under the headline “Street Life of Liverpool: Fewer Offences” (*LDPM*, 16 January 1928). What had once been a source of embarrassment for the city was now seemingly a cause for celebration. But where exactly had Liverpool’s professional prostitutes gone?

As early as 1918, CC Caldwell had noted that “there had been no increase of professional prostitutes in the City,” in spite of the chaos caused by the War (LRO H352/2/WAT/1918). Ten years later Deacon proclaimed that “the reduction in the figures is a real genuine reduction” (TNA HO/326/7/9/1928). Certainly these observations concur with the historiography of prostitution in interwar Britain – and indeed crime history more broadly – which has posited the period as one of stability and restraint sandwiched between the upheaval of the two world wars and emerging from the shadows of Victorian depravity. The emphasis has firmly been weighted in terms of decline. Although contemporary observations also focussed upon the retreat of the professional, decline did not necessarily translate as improvement but rather the substitution of one form of prostitution for another:

“The outstanding feature of present day prostitution in Great Britain is the reduction in the number of professional prostitutes and the increase in the number of amateurs.” [**Gladys Mary Hall**, *Prostitution and Sex Promiscuity in Several Countries at the Present Time* (1932)].

“When I was a young man the problem of the streets was mainly professional prostitutes. To-day the professional prostitute is not the great problem either in London or the big cities. It is mainly the cause by the tremendous number of number of girls and young people who drift into

the streets utterly free from any kind of control by their parents ... They go on the streets just for the fun of the thing. Before they know where they are, they are trapped and ensnared.” [The Reverend Canon W.O. Hunter Rodwell, Rector of Wigan, ‘Women Police,’ lecture delivered by citizens of Liverpool and District served by the Liverpool and Area Discharged Prisoners’ Aid Society (in association with the Liverpool Council of Social Service (1944)].

Whilst historians have largely failed to make reference to the amateur within peacetime studies of prostitution, like interwar commentators they have explained the retreat of the professional in terms of broader societal changes which were seen to culminate in a reduced demand for commercial sex. The new spaces of leisure and entertainment were seen to transform the ritual of courtship and offer alternative pre-marital sexual possibilities, whilst the popularisation of the new sex-psychology which promoted a harmonious sex life within marriage reduced the allure of extra-marital sex. A declining transient male population, a reduction in drunkenness, and a general improvement in street conditions and behaviour were all seen to play a role in the ‘demise’ of the professional. But for contemporaries who were keen to highlight that the battle against prostitution was far from over, the “chief explanation of the decreased demand for professional prostitutes” – as Hall contended – was “the intrusion into the prostitute’s sphere of the amateur, or, as the professional describes her, ‘the straight girl’” (Hall 1932: 24). The evidence from Liverpool suggests that although these factors were at work neither the historiographical focus upon decline nor the contemporary focus upon substitution adequately delineates the route professional prostitution - and its regulation - took within this locality. As much as this period was characterised by a move towards the ‘amateurization’ of prostitution it also witnessed a growing ‘professionalization’ of the trade, whilst crucially the traditional street-walker persisted.

Asked by the SOC whether “there is a tendency now for the professional prostitute to be superseded by the amateur,” Everett argued that “there is a great deal of misconception there” (TNA HO/326/7/10/1928). Just as he did in his annual reports to the Watch Committee, Everett

shed light on a more nuanced landscape of prostitution, whereby the decline in offence rates could be accredited to the fact that “the habits of the professional woman have changed materially within the last decade” (LRO H352/2/WAT /1928). For Everett, alterations in the physical and spatial identity of the professional had had a profound bearing upon the proximity between the police and the prostitute in recent years and, crucially, the necessity of recourse to the law:

“The old type of half-drunken, dirty, ill-dressed prostitute is rapidly vanishing in Liverpool, its place being taken by women of normal appearance and more independent habits, who live alone in flats, but frequent the places of public resort or amusements, such as the hotels, public-houses, theatres, dance halls, and cinemas, more than the streets” (TNA HO/326/8/27/1927-28).

This idea that the interwar professional was increasingly blending into the cityscape rather than polluting it couldn't have been more at odds with understandings of her Victorian predecessor, whose image was so recognisable and trade so palpable that she came to be recognised as the “quintessential female figure of the [Victorian] urban scene” (Walkowitz 1992: 21). According to Everett, the key to why “these offences are markedly on the decrease” resided in the “less blatant and offensive” form of prostitution Liverpool's interwar professionals were adopting (LRO H352/2/WAT/1928). Far from the rhetoric of depravity and vulgarity which typically accompanied regulatory responses to the prostitute, Everett referred to this body of prostitutes as “well appointed” and “respectable” (TNA HO/326/7/10/1928). Such a moderate depiction was invariably contingent upon the belief that increasingly “her manners were usually quiet and sober,” “her solicitation almost unobtrusive” and “from outward appearance” she was “indistinguishable from others” (LRO H352/2/WAT/1928). In essence, as she was perceived to become less visible and obvious to the passer-by, so too was she perceived to be less problematic for the police and less dangerous to the public. The term ‘professional’ now seemingly referred to the conduct of these women as well as the commercial aspect of this particular ‘shade’ of prostitution.

The process of ‘professionalization’ was certainly not unique to Liverpool. As noted in chapter four, Chesterton also spoke of this narrowing conduit between hegemonic and subordinate femininity, relaying how bemused it had left one male patron of prostitutes; “In the old days you knew where you were by a girl’s make-up, but now all of them seem to look the same... there doesn’t seem any clear dividing line” (Chesterton 1928: 161). In the League of Nations 1936 inquiry into the rehabilitation of prostitutes, a reply from an undisclosed seaport town relayed strikingly similar alterations to those which had been observed by Everett in Liverpool:

“Types of prostitutes have changed considerably. They were formerly composed of two classes, namely, the over-dressed and the poorly dressed and importuning or solicitation was then in a much cruder form than it is now... There are few of the former type of prostitute left to-day, but instead there is an entirely different class of person whom it is extremely difficult to detect and to distinguish from the average woman in the street” (TNA PCOM/9/141/1931-39).

As was the case in Liverpool, such changes were accredited for the marked reduction in proceedings against prostitutes over the course of the early twentieth century, going from over six hundred charges in 1908 to just twenty –eight by 1934 (ibid: 1931-39). And, in neighbouring Manchester, by the late 1930s the CC noted how increasingly “women ply their immoral calling by disguised solicitation” (MCA Q352/2/M1/1937-38). In recent years the historiography has begun to illuminate this spatial, physical and behavioural transformation of the interwar professional. Slater has argued that the period gave way to an “increased professionalization and commercialisation of prostitution within the West End,” which worked to move trade away from the streets (Slater 2007a: 212). Here, prostitutes forged new covert sexual sites such as massage parlours, language schools, teashops and apartments from which they were able to carve out a commercialised sexual industry away from the gaze of the police. Others capitalised on the bustling trade of the West End’s public houses, restaurants and cafes, often forming alliances with the management of such establishments in order to garner regular custom and secure their presence within these spaces (ibid: 142-43). The Scottish NVA had already noted a similar spatial and behavioural shift by the early 1920s, observing how “solicitation in the streets by the better class prostitutes is now much

less than formerly, and that hotels, dance palaces, cinemas and taxi-cabs are now used by such persons” (TNA HO45/12663/1925).

Using the regulatory material to trace why, how and how far these alterations played out is inherently problematic given that the changes assumed by this body of professionals both permitted them a greater aptitude to evade legal intervention and reduced the necessity of recourse to the law (after all the solicitation laws were essentially concerned with the preservation of ‘public order’). Perhaps the most compelling evidence is the declining arrest rates themselves. However, the material does afford the historian momentary glimpses. For example, although the court registers provide scant information about the physical appearance of prostitutes and the specific location of street-walkers upon their arrest – only the street name is recorded – the entries of court cases dealing with brothel offences and the Liverpool City Police Brothel Register where more geographical detail is given do suggest that prostitutes were increasingly making use of spaces other than the streets. In March 1930, for example, Mary Hughes was under surveillance after the police were tipped off – interestingly - by prostitute Olive Holt who claimed that Hughes was using her city centre hotel room in St. Johns Lane to ply her trade (MPA LCPF/Brothel Register/1915-1964). After three weeks observation the case was dropped on the grounds of insufficient evidence, but in 1930 alone there were three other investigations into the use of hotels by prostitutes. Although in the end no convictions were brought against these women, in a year where only seven arrests were made in relation to brothel offences this number seems proportionately significant. Indeed, Brogden’s oral history of interwar policing in Liverpool also sheds light on the usages made of hotels by women suspected of brothel offences. For example, ‘B.T.’ recalled how he had “done quite a few brothels up Mount Pleasant in a couple of hotels there and Lord Nelson Street,” evidence corroborated by the Brothel Register which pinpoints The Albion Hotel on Mount Pleasant and the Bruford Hotel in Lord Nelson Street as sites of frequent police observation (Brogden 1991: 125). In moving their prostitution away from the streets and into the private domain – whether it be in private flats, apartments or hotel rooms – these women had to be dealt with not under the solicitation laws but rather brothel legislation. Yet, low conviction rates

regarding ‘off-street’ prostitution (for example, in 1926 just over 60% of brothel offence arrests led to a conviction) should not necessarily be read as a sign that this spatial shift was not occurring. As one interwar constable recalled, securing a brothel conviction was a laborious, time-consuming and often monotonous task:

“You had to keep threedays’ [sic] observation on it and we’d count the number of men coming in and the number of men as they come out. You’d go in the brothels about two or three in the morning. Then you’d make your evidence out and go down to the Magistrate’s, who’d give you a warrant to raid the brothel. We’d get a warrant and go on a suitable day – usually towards the end of the week when men had their wages” (ibid: 126).

In cases where just one woman inhabited a property this process was further complicated by the imprecision of what legally constituted a brothel. Although the CLA Acts of 1885, 1912 and 1922 sought to equip the police with powers to suppress brothels, emphasis increasingly resided upon the curtailment of exploitation by third parties; “punishing those who make money out of the immorality of others” (MPA LCPF/Instructions/1944). As laid out in the LCPF *Instruction Book* for 1944 this involved issuing charges against persons for:

- 1) keeping a brothel
- 2) managing a brothel
- 3) assisting in the management of a brothel
- 4) knowingly permitting any premises or part of them of which he is occupier or of which he is in charge to be used as a brothel for the purpose of habitual prostitution

As Laite and Slater have observed, it was actually two landmark legal cases (as opposed to the stipulations laid out within the CLA’s) which culminated in the definition of a ‘brothel,’ and thus – in theory - provided a precedent on how to legislatively deal (or not deal as the case may be) with women working on their own (Slater 2007a: 89; Laite 2006: 1-7). In 1895, the *Singleton v. Ellison* case ruled that, “a house used by a woman for the purpose of prostitution of herself only is not a

brothel” (*Singleton v. Ellison* 1895: 1 QB 607). However, in 1907 the *Durose v. Wilson* case partially overturned this decision by stating that “if several flats in a block of buildings under one roof are used for the purpose of prostitution, the whole block may be a brothel” (*Durose v. Wilson* 1907: 71JP 263; 96 L.T. 645 DC). Interestingly, the official line took by the LCPF in the interwar period showed little regard for the 1907 ruling, stating that:

“It has been held that more than one woman must be engaged to constitute a brothel ... If a prostitute takes a flat or a room in a house and takes men there she commits no offence so long as she does not let other women bring men there” (MPA LCPF/Instructions/1944).

However, the ambiguity of the law evidently granted the LCPF a degree of latitude when it came to interpreting what constituted a brothel. For example, in September 1927, 33 year old Renee Wright was arrested for the offence of keeping a brothel at her first floor flat at 56b Huskisson Street. The court register detailed no other person arrested at this address, suggesting that Wright was indeed operating on her own, but in spite of the stance taken in the Instruction Book, she was found guilty (she had entered a plea of not guilty) and received the option of a fine of twenty five pounds or 1 month imprisonment. On the whole, such cases where women were arrested when they were the only person inhabiting a property – or at least recorded as the only person charged – were exceptional and thus make it hard to chart this spatial shift, with just six other convictions between January 1926 and December 1928 (6.6% of total proceedings for brothel offences for this period) On the flip side, of course, this meant that prostitutes who lived with an/other prostitute/s were technically in breach of the law. The consistently small number of occupants per brothel in cases coming up in court – for example, in 1926 there was an average of just 2.06 persons per property in cases which resulted in a conviction – suggest that prostitutes were either on their own – or with an associate – carving out a culture of small-scale private prostitution. Of course, it is important to remember that brothel convictions remained very low throughout the 1920s, and had petered out almost completely by the mid 1930s, interestingly at the very time the CC observed prostitutes to be making increasing use of private accommodation to ply their trade, perhaps a sign that the LCPF largely continued to favour Nott-Bower’s system of

management and containment over suppression. Indeed, for the period 1926 to 1930 almost 60 percent of investigations launched against suspected brothels had been instigated following a complaint from a member of the public, suggesting that largely action was taken in order to appease the ratepayer rather than out of the proactive responses or inclination of the police themselves. The latitude of the law evidently favoured the prostitute who engineered both independent and covert methods of prostitution. The success of the professional's concealment, however, was not just contingent upon the activity – or inactivity – of the LCPF, but was also aided by the experiences and movements of her female contemporaries across the broader social spectrum. In a period where women were remaining single for longer – in Jones' sample just 26.2% of Liverpool's women between the age of 20 and 24 were married – in a locality where a long-standing problem of housing shortages had resulted in high level occupation of one bedroom self-contained flats and/or one-roomed dwellings – 6.4% of Liverpool's population lived in such accommodation in 1919 - and in a climate where changing social and political attitudes towards women opened up new opportunities, the single woman living alone was no longer a phenomenon associated instinctively with the prostitute or spinster (see chapter eight; McKenna1991).

Even where professional prostitutes were seen to be frequenting spaces used by the public, such as the public house, the LCPF seemingly continued with this attitude of inertia; "Their conduct in these places is seldom noticeable enough to justify interference by the management, who of course are informed and warned by the police when known women of this sort resort habitually to one particular place" (TNA HO/326/8/27/1927-28). Liverpool was certainly not short of public houses, a fact which no doubt reduced the concentration of prostitutes per establishment and allowed such women to patronize them relatively discreetly. For example, in 1933 there were 1,251 publican's licences in operation within Liverpool, whereas by comparison there were 455 in Manchester (*Cmd. 4727/ 1933*). In his *Social Survey of Merseyside* in the early 1930s, Jones calculated that in the inner districts of the city - crucially the area in which the majority of prostitutes solicited - there were "26 public-houses to every 1,000 persons," creating a landscape whereby "a public-house can be seen at almost every street corner" (Jones 1934: 286). Of course, the frequenting of public-houses by prostitutes in Liverpool – and indeed any town or city across



Britain – was nothing new. In fact, in his damning report of late nineteenth century Liverpool, Armstrong talked of the public-house as being “the market-place of the prostitutes, the Exchange-flags of the harlots and their buyers,” bustling with “half-dressed,” “unkempt” women in “groups of half-a-dozen” by evening, and by day “wretched women” who after the “night’s debauch” “drown thought in the morning hours by the expenditure of the earnings of the night” (LRO H252/ARM/1890). What had changed by the interwar period, was according to Everett, the conduct of prostitutes within these spaces. The decline in arrests for drunkenness in Liverpool, and specifically a fall in the use of methylated spirits amongst females, combined with the physical transformation of the professional to ensure that she was less recognisable as a prostitute and problematic as an individual. Essentially, the key was that she was off the streets and away from view of respectable society.

In part, broader social and technological advances were understood to have worked to both deter and entice the professional away from the city’s streets, and ensure that she existed as a far more surreptitious figure whilst patronizing public spaces. Asked by the SOC whether “the improved lighting of the streets has anything to do with the improved decency in them,” Deacon responded, “I am inclined to think it has” (*Cmd.* 1928: 32-33). Indeed, during the War the temporary restrictions placed upon the city’s street lighting proved a source of agitation for the police as Liverpool’s street solicitors capitalised upon the sanctuary afforded by the darkness of the main thoroughfares (LRO H364/5/WOM/1916). In peacetime, the prostitute’s ability to solicit and carry out relations with clients whilst subverting the gaze of the LCPF was undermined by extensive street lighting which crucially illuminated entries and back streets as well as principle thoroughfares. Growing rates of private motorcar ownership throughout the interwar period – and especially in the late 1930s – were seen to play an instrumental role in altering Liverpool’s sexual geography. Just as Cockcroft has observed in relation to Liverpool’s extending electric tram network at the turn of the twentieth century, the motorcar further facilitated the shift of prostitution away from the city centre streets into the suburbs and beyond to the outlying countryside, sometimes taking it out of the LCPF’S jurisdiction completely (Cockcroft 1991: 20). This was a

trend observed throughout Britain. For example, the reply to the League of Nations survey from the same seaport town mentioned above stated how:

“A few years ago two streets in this City were the recognised streets where prostitutes of all classes could be found, and men desiring their association frequented these streets. In later years, however, considerable change has taken place. Prostitutes now frequent out-of-the-way places and solicit persons travelling in motor-cars, the drivers of which appear to know where these prostitutes can be found. Acts of prostitution take place now more often in the country around than in the city itself” (TNA PCOM/9/141/1931-39).

In theory, this spatial alteration should have been a source of anxiety for the LCPF for not only did it undermine their policy of containment it also shifted responsibility to the suburban policing divisions where beat policing was complicated by less constables per acre. In reality, the LCPF showed no signs of concern regarding the geographical transformation of prostitution, and in fact, in many ways this move aided their policy of ridding prostitution from the public's gaze. In 1934, there were no arrests made in connection to prostitution away from the city centre and the immediate surrounding residential areas, an indication perhaps that no proactive measures were taken by the LCPF to alter their policies of control in accordance to this new sexual geography. What did perturb the police, however, was the changing dynamics of solicitation which the motorcar facilitated, for it was not just a case of prostitutes soliciting men in motorcars, but also men using their vehicles as a way of proactively seeking association with prostitutes and/or enticing innocent bystanders. The period witnessed the inception of the culture of “gutter-crawling” – or ‘kerb crawling’ as it is more typically known today – whereby as Hall noted in 1932 “a man will drive his car very slowly alongside the pavement, and by word, or gesture, invite girls to enter” (Hall 1932: 34). Everett called for the “augmentation and simplifying” of the existing laws in order to deal with “objectionable behaviour short of actual immorality, but suggestive of it, such as the use of motor vehicles as a medium for questionable acquaintanceships or introductions with alternative motives” ( LRO H352/2/WAT/1928). Yet, it is probable that Everett's concerns were framed in light of a number of recent cases where ‘respectable’ young women had been pestered by

male drivers ‘gutter-crawling’, and thus were guided by the desire to protect innocent members of the public from annoyance rather than deal with the problem itself.

As a contemporary commentator observed, “one of the noticeable facts about prostitution is the ease with which it adjusts itself to, and utilises altering circumstances and customs” (Hall 1932: 34). Certainly, the evidence from Liverpool suggests that the culture of prostitution altered in accordance to the broader social, cultural and technological landscape, which worked to simultaneously force and entice it into new forms. Yet, it is imperative not to overlook the power of the LCPF and their policies had in fashioning this new professionalised culture. As White has argued, “the criminalization of prostitution led to the professionalization of the industry” (quoted in Slater 2007: 198). In interwar Liverpool, police responses to prostitution were understood to have cultivated a custom whereby some prostitutes moved their trade away from the city completely and others for months at a time in order to escape legal intervention. Indeed, in Chesterton’s *Darkest London* she noted how “many of these girls come from the North of England, particularly from Liverpool... In Liverpool.. if a girl be convicted a number of times for solicitation, she is more or less marked down by the police, and the surveillance renders it difficult” (Chesterton 1926: 80). Unlike London, Liverpool had a largely compact sexual geography which, as I demonstrate later, was concentrated around Lime Street, the business district and up into Toxteth. In such an environment, recognition would have been almost unavoidable for prostitutes who regularly walked the streets, and thus perhaps London provided women with the anonymity and space their home city could not, though it could be the case that these women had moved for employment opportunities which had not materialised and had subsequently ‘fell’ into prostitution. Chesterton’s portrayal of a city tough on prostitution could not contrast more vividly with Armstrong’s earlier claims that Liverpool was a sanctuary for prostitutes.

Although the move towards professionalization was not unique to Liverpool, the LCPF’s responses to it certainly were. For example, in London, the movement of prostitution away from the streets was a source of intense anxiety for the Metropolitan Police and fuelled a series of media frenzies. In Manchester, the CC warned how low arrest rates should not be read to mean that

“prostitution has ceased” but rather there had been a move towards “disguised solicitation” which hindered the police’s ability to regulate it (MCA Q352/2/M1/1938). As noted in chapter four, Chesterton was also disturbed by the aesthetic blurring between the prostitute and regular women. And, the League of Nations urged local police forces to reconsider their regulatory tactics, arguing that “methods of dealing with the problem cannot remain stationary” (TNA PCOM/9/141/1931-39). Yet, this was a process of professionalization welcomed by the LCPF because of, ironically, the narrowing – rather than widening – of the conduit between the underworld and the overworld. Far from representing an ‘outcast group’ this new figure of the professional prostitute was able to submerge into hegemonic society by adopting the physical, spatial and behavioural mannerisms of their female contemporaries. And in assuming a closer figurative proximity to the public at large the professional was able to loosen her literal proximity to the LCPF. Thus, policing prostitution in interwar Liverpool was guided ultimately by the desire to protect the public from exposure to this form of feminine vice. The deviance and legislative treatment of a prostitute was measured in accordance to how visible her solicitation and how recognisable her profession was. Ultimately, the scale of prostitution was not necessarily declining as far and fast as the statistics suggest, but rather shifting into less obvious and thus less problematic spaces. As the new form of professionalised prostitution took hold, Deacon’s theory that the statistics were reflecting a “genuine decline” is both a little optimistic and misleading (TNA HO/326/7/9/1928).

### **(5:3) Policing the ‘unprofessional’ professional**

“They were dirty, filthy women – the lowest of the low in their dress and cleanliness. They’d go with some chap in a doorway. You used to get a lot of it out on the street ... we could pick them up easily and some of them – Selina Sefton was one – you had to be drunk before you went with her, a right old hag... she had well over a hundred convictions for prostitution over years” (Brogden 1991: 130).

If the ‘professionalised’ professional was conceptualised as unproblematic for the LCPF because she conducted herself in a ‘respectable’ manner and plied her trade away from the streets, then in spite of the image of improvement Everett and Deacon were keen to project on the national

stage, the archetypal street-walker was often a source of concern because of her frequent inability to be either 'respectable' or private. The statistical evidence certainly suggests that up until the early 1930s street solicitation continued to operate on a significant scale, with proceedings in Liverpool consistently outnumbering those in neighbouring Manchester. In 1926, for example, the LCPF made 407 arrests against women deemed to be 'common prostitutes' for offences on the streets of Liverpool, whereas brothel offences (by both women and men) totalled at 57 cases. The apparent gulf which was arising between those women who were able to participate in the more professionalised elements of the trade and those who through economic restrictions, age or sheer choice continued to patronise the streets in much the same way as their Victorian predecessors had done so lent itself to a dichotomised policy of policing whereby regulatory responses were guided not so much by what prostitutes were doing (as apparent through the rather laissez-faire approach taken in regards to the 'professionalized' professional), but rather by how and where they were doing it. And, as documented in chapter three, official responses to street prostitution were further dichotomised in the courts by who exactly was doing it. As we have seen, penalties issued to the 'young beginner' were rooted in the anticipation that early legislative interventions could deter a woman from committing further offences, whilst penalties issued against the 'hardened offender' were rather less optimistic underpinned by the submission that current terms of imprisonment and tariffs of fines did little to eradicate or even reduce prostitution amongst this cohort but did serve in temporarily removing the presence of these women – and thus their potential 'evil' influence and/or offensiveness – from the streets. In pinpointing the actions of Selina Sefton – a prostitute who continually appeared in the court registers and whose broader life experiences I explore in Section Four – H.P's above account sheds light on the continued difficulties the LCPF experienced in dealing with habitual offenders who flagrantly plied their trade on the streets in an indiscreet and often boisterous manner. Evidently, the archetypal Victorian street-walker had not 'vanished' completely from Liverpool's streets.

Using the information provided within the court registers and the oral testimonies of interwar beat officers themselves, this section seeks to illuminate how just as their late-Victorian predecessors had done so, the LCPF in their front-line policing of prostitution pursued a policy of

management and containment. By their own admissions the LCPF were not necessarily attempting to eradicate prostitution *per se*. Instead, the pragmatic stance adopted by Nott-Bower some years earlier regarding the ‘inevitability’ of prostitution continued to underpin responses at the highest echelons of the LCPF, and, as we shall see, often permeated downwards to inform the attitudes of officers on the beat. If within the arena of the court, age and offending histories were integral to the way in which prostitutes were dealt with, then it is argued that on the streets such factors took a back seat to the spatial and behavioural execution of prostitution. Although, that is not to say that there was not an extended policy pursued throughout each stage of the judicial process; policing and judging. In fact, the concept of “ridding the streets of this nuisance” was just as integral to the frontline policing of prostitution in the streets – informing who was arrested, where and why – as it was to the dispensation of prison sentences within the court arena (MPA LCPF/Instructions/1926). The words ‘streets’ and ‘nuisance’ were paramount; this was about where and/or how prostitution was carried out, rather than necessarily about the fact that it was being carried out.

The process of ‘cleaning the streets’ however did not mean that by plying her trade publically in the streets a woman was automatically liable to arrest should she come under the attention of the LCPF. As documented within the *Instruction Book* and reaffirmed over the course of the SOC, constables were advised in the first instance to issue a caution against a woman observed to “continually approach men” and to only “consider the question of prosecution” should she continue to solicit after this point (ibid: 1926). This instruction had a particular importance in the 1920s given that appeasing the public no longer necessarily meant being seen to take action but being seen to do so in a justifiable and reasonable manner. Indeed, many of the personal testimonies from interwar beat officers collected by Brogden reveal a relatively high degree of latitude towards street solicitors. M.P., for example, remembered Liverpool’s interwar prostitutes in the following way:

“They were all right. They never caused trouble. I’ve never arrested a prostitute in my life. It wasn’t exactly tolerated. If they made a nuisance of themselves, they would be arrested. But as long as they were discreet, they were just left alone. If a girl was being blatant about it, pulling

up men right, left, and centre, then she'd find herself arrested. But as a general rule, they had to be warned once before you could contemplate taking them in" (Brogden 1991: 124-25).

Similarly, A.M. recalled how "unless you saw them importuning, it was better to leave them alone. They had their own places to work and if you didn't trouble them, they wouldn't trouble you" (ibid: 130). Such responses infer that some constables cultivated their own codes of acceptable and unacceptable prostitution which may not have represented an outright toleration but demonstrated a sense of both pragmatic and humanitarian policing. As Brogden has noted, "as long as the woman did not go out of her way to solicit customers, it was recognised that she too had a living to make" (ibid: 124). These unwritten codes or bounds of appropriate prostitution were contingent upon both the spatial nature of prostitution and the behavioural conduct of prostitutes themselves; being public did not always lead to being prosecuted. The process of 'moving on' was presumably far more commonplace than recourse to the law in cases where solicitation was covert enough as to avoid drawing the attention of the public and thus did not pose a moral threat. Street prostitution, it would seem, did not instinctively mean publically visible prostitution, just as the street prostitute did not necessarily carry out her business in an 'unprofessional' manner simply because of the public spaces she used to do so.

On the same note, however, the central role police interpretation and personal vagaries played within the regulation of prostitution could lead to the unfair - and at times unlawful - control of prostitutes. The autonomy afforded to officers on the beat free from the gaze of their superiors - and often the judgements of colleagues when patrolling alone - could combine with the tedium of beat policing and/or the personal crusades of officers to result in instances where little regard was given to either the written law or the informal culture of issuing caution and granting some form of leeway. As Brogden has said, often "moral indignation was compounded by physical repulsion, and reinforced by the reservoir of legislation" (ibid: 124-5). Some, like S.H. seemed to actively seek out prosecutions;

“I used to lock them up ten a penny on Lime Street. Used to come across them all the time. When I saw one, I’d go up to the fellow she had accosted and say, ‘Excuse me, can you tell me what that lady said to you?’” ... I’ve locked them up ten a penny. I’ve locked them up out of the bloody gutter, drunk on methylated spirits (we used to call it ‘mojo’) (ibid: 128).

Similarly, H.P. recalled how he had “locked up a hundred prostitutes” and how he “could pick them up easily” (ibid: 129). These responses certainly add weight to the concerns forwarded to the SOC by Bathe, whereby she argued, for example, that prostitutes had experienced harassment from certain officers intent upon arresting them every time they were seen in public regardless of whether they were soliciting or not. It would seem then that policing responses to street prostitution in interwar Liverpool could range from the fair and the lenient to the overzealous and the arbitrary.

Whilst recollections such as those of H.P. and S.H.’s time ‘on the beat’ should be treated with a degree of interpretative caution – after all the choice of language used suggests these were men who clearly still held disdain for Liverpool’s interwar street prostitutes some sixty years later – their accounts do nevertheless call into question just how far and fast “the old type” of drunken, poorly dressed and poorly behaved prostitute Everett had said was “rapidly vanishing” was actually ‘vanishing’ (TNA HO/326/8/27/1927-28). Although it is impossible to reconstruct an aesthetical impression of interwar prostitutes from the court register entries – i.e. their clothing and general appearances – it is possible to garner a deepened understanding of the behavioural conduct of these women both as individuals and as an offending group. The police court registers reveal, for example, that on the whole drunkenness levels amongst street prostitutes were fairly low throughout the period. By collating every entry recorded in the registers at four year intervals (starting at 1918 and finishing at 1938) it is possible to calculate that per year on average 11% of arrested street prostitutes received an accompanying charge for drunkenness (that is to say at the same time at which they were arrested for prostitution).<sup>3</sup> Whilst the proportion of drunk prostitutes was low, there was clearly *an* association between alcohol and prostitution, and for some women being publically drunk no doubt heightened the visibility of their solicitation and thus left them

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<sup>3</sup> The sampled years are 1918, 1922, 1926, 1930, 1934 and 1938.



more liable to police intervention. However, reconstructing this process is unfeasible given that the police court registers followed a standardised format whereby the offence for prostitution was always recorded first with additional charges following. A longitudinal analysis of drunkenness rates is offered in chapter seven with the aim of determining whether prostitutes were really becoming more sober as the research period progressed, whilst the upcoming section within this chapter on ‘Interpreting the Statistics’ begins to question the validity of the drunkenness rates more broadly. Another way in which we can examine the behavioural conduct of Liverpool’s prostitutes is to establish the proportion of women who were dealt with under the VA – the provision used in cases where women were deemed to have either carried out their solicitation in a ‘boisterous’ or ‘riotous’ manner or behaved in such a way by engaging in sexual activity – in comparison to those dealt with under the TPCA – the provision used in cases where annoyance had been caused by soliciting. Over the course of the research period, just 16% of arrests made in relation to prostitution offences by ‘common prostitutes’ were carried out under the VA, perhaps an indication that prostitutes were typically neither ‘boisterous’ nor ‘riotous’.<sup>4</sup> Broken down further, only 5.5% of the 16% of cases legislated under the VA referred to instances where ‘carnal connection’ had been observed by the constable, perhaps an indication that prostitutes were not necessarily using the streets as a space in which to fulfil sexual transactions and/or of the infrequency with which the solicitation laws dealt with ‘actual’ transgression as oppose to ‘potential’ or ‘implied’. As former constable P.E. recalled to Brogden, “I never caught them in the act” (Brogden 1991: 132). But what about Selina Sefton, the woman identified by H.P. as “a right old hag”? (ibid: 129) What manner did she conduct her prostitution in? Well, interestingly, her personal offending history appears to have largely emulated the behavioural patterns of the broader prostitute population, incurring an additional charge for drunkenness in 12.5% of her total prostitution convictions, and only being legislated under the VA in 15% of her arrests.

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<sup>4</sup> Again, this statistic is based upon sampled years at four year intervals, but this time the sample begins at 1922, and finished at 1934, as the TPCA was only used in Liverpool from 1921 following the enactment of the LCA and the cessation of the LIA, whilst the year 1938 has not been included because only 1 instance of prostitution has been located within the registers, and thus to include this year would distort the average considerably.

So, if the statistical data implies that Liverpool's interwar prostitutes were generally engaging in prostitution in an indiscreet and sober manner, and the oral testimony largely corroborates with the policy outlined within the *Instruction Book* to resist making an arrest if solicitation was observed to be conducted in an unobtrusive manner until the point at which it persisted after caution had been issued, then why were street prostitutes still being arrested in significant numbers up until the 1930s? Were these arrests the result of persistent solicitation and the flouting of cautions? Were they the result of over-zealous policing such as that carried out by former constable H.P.? Certainly, these factors would have been at play, but it is argued that the answer may also lie in the spatial execution of prostitution.

#### **(5:4) 'Cleaning the streets': The sexual geography of prostitution**

If, until recently, scholars have been slow to incorporate 'space' into their historical studies of crime and sexuality, then as the content of this investigation has illuminated hitherto, ideas surrounding 'space' were indicative to how prostitution was represented, regulated and experienced in the historical context. For example, Victorian anxieties over 'moral miasma' emerged in response to the rapid urbanisation of Britain's towns and cities, and more specifically, the new sexual opportunities afforded by the literal spaces of the new metropolises – i.e. the park, the public house, the theatre, the street – as well as the sense of anonymity which both the cityscape and the large populaces it housed allowed for. In turn, such concerns called forth "new forms of industrial discipline and new forms of social control," and as we have seen regulatory responses to prostitution were regularly framed along spatial lines (Englander 1998:58). For example, Nott-Bower argued that the late nineteenth century system of prostitution management enabled the LCPF to have a sophisticated and detailed knowledge of the sexual geography of prostitution by containing street solicitation and brothels to certain parts of the city. By the interwar period, space was a key determinant in defining the tolerable and intolerable parameters of prostitution, in the organisation of prostitute behaviours into prostitute categories, in shaping police responses (or lack of responses) to prostitute activity, and thus ultimately in fashioning a hierarchy of vice. In turn, such legislative responses were seen to impact upon the spatial mobility and capabilities of prostitute women in their everyday use of public spaces, as Bathe highlighted in her evidence to the SOC. Yet, the spatial organisation of prostitution was not simply a construct of police policy and

practice but was also receptive to broader influences such as the improvement of street lighting and the growing use of the motorcar, which altered the geography of prostitution and in turn the abilities and/or inclinations of the police to regulate. And, as we shall see, the physicality of the city and the functionality of particular zones were all indicative to both the geography of prostitution and its regulation.

One of the most fascinating insights to surface from the exchanges made between Liverpool's judicial leaders and the SOC panel was that regarding the absence of prostitution on the docks and in the surrounding vicinity. Whilst Everett conceded that the "large seafaring transitory population in Liverpool" presented difficulties in that it was understood to contribute to "the number of cases" of prostitution within the city, he argued that "the docks do not present any special problem" because prostitution did not take place "in the dock areas" nor "the streets surrounding the docks" (TNA HO/326/7/10/1928). With its twelve miles of docks and status as a global seaport, prostitution and the docks had long been – and continue to be – synonymous to one another within the popular psyche and folklore. This association is encapsulated perhaps nowhere as vividly as in the nineteenth century sea-shanty song *Maggie May*, the tale of a notorious Liverpool prostitute whose habit of stealing from sailors had led to her transportation to Tasmania:

"I shan't forget the day when I first met Maggie May

She was cruising up and down on Canning Place

With a figure so divine, like a frigate of the line

So, being a sailor, I gave chase.

Oh, Maggie, Maggie May, they've taken you away

They've sent you to Van Diemen's cruel shore

For you robbed so many a sailor, and skinned so many a whaler

And you'll never shine in Paradise Street no more."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Lyrics to *Maggie May*, <http://lyricsplayground.com/alpha/songs/m/maggiemay.shtml>. There are slight variations to the lyrics amongst different versions, but they all carry the same message.

Canning Place and Paradise Street, two of Maggie's 'haunts', were roads which lead into the docks and were in the main hub of sailors lodging houses. The idea that by the interwar period prostitution was no longer being carried out on the docks or in the immediate vicinity is, therefore, very significant. Everett gave two explanations for this absence. Firstly, in terms of the actual docks he noted how their status as private docks belonging to the Mersey Dock and Harbour Board meant that they were gated with a strong emphasis upon security. "Every gate is manned" and dock instructions advised security personnel "not to allow any woman into the docks at all unless she is there for a legitimate purpose" (TNA HO/326/7/10/1928). Earlier in 1920, Caldwell had also talked about the relative absence of prostitution on Liverpool's docks. During the war, he noted how particularly difficulties had arisen owing to the increased number of ships docking in the city, "especially with regard to American ships, but it is comparatively isolated now" (*Cmd.* 222/1920: 182). He talked about how "occasionally" prostitutes were smuggled onto boats; "sometimes they are dressed up as men and taken on by the crew," but compared to areas where the docks are more open – such as the adjoining Port of Birkenhead – the enclosed and secured docks in Liverpool meant that such incidences were rare (*ibid.*: 182). Secondly, Everett contended that the absence of prostitution in the residential area surrounding the docks – the Scotland Road area of the city which lay north of Princes Dock following the Mersey northwards until Bramely Moor Dock – was the consequence of an "extraordinary" level of community policing and intolerance to "immoral conduct":

"... it is extraordinary that in Liverpool one of our chief dock areas is situated where most of the Irish population reside, and which is a Roman Catholic community, and there I should a brothel is unheard of in that particular Police Division, which borders on the docks. Certainly immoral conduct in the streets would not be tolerated by the inhabitants at all" (TNA HO/326/7/10/1928).

This claim is certainly at odds with historical and popular associations regarding the involvement of Liverpool's Irish population within prostitution, and one which is further examined in chapter eight. Was there really an absence of prostitution in these areas, or was it more a case of

an absence of police action within certain quarters of the city? As Luddy has argued in relation to the spatial policing of prostitution in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Ireland, “as long as the women did not reside, work or show their presence in the middle-class areas then it was acceptable” (Luddy 2007: 232).

By plotting the locations in which ‘common prostitutes’ were arrested onto a series of maps, this section argues that the LCPF did pursue a particular spatial policy whereby they sought to manage levels of prostitute activity within specific areas with the anticipation that prostitution could be contained to other areas; this was a system of management and containment. Once again, the concept of visibility lay at the crux of this regulatory response. But, if as Brogden has said, interwar beat officers were more akin to being “uniformed garbage-men” – as oppose to combaters of crime – and as the LCPF *Instruction Book* stipulated regulating prostitution was about “ridding the streets of this nuisance,” then it is argued that the sexual geography of prostitution reveals that some streets were more important to keep clean from vice than others (Brogden 1991: 2; MPA LCPF/Instructions/1926).

The visible threat of the prostitute was highly indicative of whom the threat was seen to be levelled against, and it is contended that these spatial breaches may explain why up until the early 1930s the city’s prostitutes continued to be arrested in significant numbers in spite of the low numbers of behavioural breaches. Of course, there is the inherent problem of knowing whether the sexual geography of prostitution in any locality reflects prostitute or police activity. Howell has argued in relation to his spatial assessment of prostitution in late Victorian Cambridge, “if there was a ‘fit’ between prostitution activity and prosttutitional policy, this was largely because the latter dictated the nature of such activity” (Howell 2000: 396). Similarly, Slater has argued in the context of interwar London, that disparate policing responses across the metropolis meant that prostitution “was only constituted as ‘vice’” in certain districts around the West End, whereas “similar activities in the East End” rarely resulted in proceedings (Slater 2007a: 212). For example, “from October 1926 to October there was not one arrest for soliciting at Thames Police Court,” however “an average of 88 women seen by officers of the London Public Morality Council plying their trade in Limehouse and Whitechapel over a three-day period in 1925” (ibid: 77). Indeed, as the previous

section on the 'respectable' prostitute illustrated and the following chapter which considers the spatial policing of prostitution by the LWPP goes on to show, the 'absence' of prostitution in particular localities tended to denote police inactivity rather than prostitute inactivity, as palpable through the qualitative evidence which frequently showed prostitution to take place in these areas, and often was even known to the police to occur in them (i.e. the police were aware solicitation took place in certain public houses and on the outskirts of the city but were not inclined to legislate). Yet, at the same time, as my spatial analysis infers, it is probable that at a more subtle level prostitute actions and movements also contributed to the fashioning of this geography, whether by capitalising upon male demand in particular areas, the seclusion afforded by the physical layout of the cityscape in specific locations, attempts to spatially resist police attention, and/or a conscious geographical move by professionals as a means of distinguishing themselves and their services from that of the amateur who increasingly saturated their traditional 'haunts' at this moment.

Map 1 plots the locations in which 'common prostitutes' were arrested under the TPCA and VA for the year 1918. In total, 97.3% of arrests were made within the confines of this map which covers the city centre and the residential areas in its immediate vicinity. The top ten street localities of arrest have been pinpointed, and in total 76% of arrests made took place within these ten streets. Prostitution arrests took place across 99 streets in 1918, although as both the coverage of Map 1 and the high proportion of arrests taking place within the highlighted ten streets (over  $\frac{3}{4}$ ) indicates prostitute arrests were largely concentrated within specific quarters of the city; the entertainment district surrounding Lime Street; the business district south of Lime Street leading in to Georges Pierhead and Canning Dock; the Pitt Street area south-east of Lime Street which housed the city's Chinatown district; and the London Road area immediately north of Lime Street. So where were the main 'hotspots' for prostitution or prostitute arrests in 1918, and what can these tell us about the spatial organisation of prostitution and/or prostitution policy? Perhaps unsurprisingly, the largest proportion of arrests – 35% - took place in Lime Street, the road which ran horizontal to the main entrance of the station and was the city's entertainment 'Mecca' housing Liverpool's largest and busiest public houses, cinemas, theatres and dancehalls. Another 5% of arrests were made in Elliot

Street, a thoroughfare which ran off Lime Street. Historically, the Lime Street area of the city had been identified as *the* chief site of solicitation transactions, a historical association which continues to permeate the popular psyche. For example, in their 1868 annual report, the Liverpool branch of the Association for the Suppression of Vicious Practices had described the Domville Dance Hall in Lime Street as a place where, “vice ran riot; abandoned wretches in the form of women, demons in the shape of men, held their orgies...” (quoted in Bartley 200: 3). In 1890, Armstrong had spoke out about the sexual exchanges which took place within Lime Street’s “flourishing establishments whose chief function apparently is to serve as the rendezvous of the young men and courtesans” (LRO H252/ARM/1890). Perhaps nowhere greater was this association solidified and immortalised than in the folk legend of Maggie May; “Oh, Maggie, Maggie May, they have taken you away; And you’ll never walk down Lime Street anymore.”<sup>6</sup> Concerns surrounding the ‘function’ of this area were heightened during the Great War as troops descended upon the city propelling the already sizeable transient male population, fears which resurfaced again during the Second World War particularly in regards to the ‘allure’ of American troops. On the one hand, this area provided Liverpool’s prostitutes with a concentrated supply of men, and thus in part the high levels of arrests made here may be understood as a policing policy shaped in response to prostitute practices and the usages prostitutes made of the ‘natural’ functionality of this area. As the interwar LCPF constable S.H. informed Brogden, “I used to lock them up ten a penny on Lime Street” (Brogden 1991:128). Yet, on the other hand whilst no specific or special policy was referenced by the LCPF in their administrative records with regards to Lime Street, it is probable that a particular premium was placed upon ridding *this* street of the ‘nuisance’ of prostitution. Lime Street was in many ways the symbolic heart of the city. It was the first point of entry for those arriving into the city via rail, including J.B. Priestley who noted in his famous *English Journey* of the early 1930s, “just before you reach Lime Street Station your train runs into a deep cutting and daylight promptly vanishes, never returning, I feel, until your other homeward train has left Lime Street and Liverpool behind” (Priestley 1934:177). Lime Street – the station and the thoroughfare – was for the majority of visitors their first glimpse of Liverpool the city. Concurrently, Lime Street and its adjacent roads operated as a busy commercial space, housing many of the city’s most popular shops including

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<sup>6</sup> Lyrics to Maggie May, <http://lyricsplayground.com/alpha/songs/m/maggiemay.shtml>.

Lewis's Department Store. Perhaps more so than any other of the city's thoroughfares, Lime Street represented a unique site whereby the 'overworld' and the 'underworld' operated in parallel to one another. Solicitation by prostitutes was particularly problematic here for it marked a moment in which these two worlds collided, a transaction which blurred the edges between the hegemonic and the subordinate. Keeping this area 'clean' from prostitution was no doubt of paramount importance to the LCPF in their pursuit to project an image of an 'improved' city to both visitors and citizens alike. Similarly, there was no other way in which the LCPF could have so proficiently appeased the ratepayer and the Liverpool Watch Committee than by keeping the heart of the city as free from prostitution and prostitutes as feasibly possible. In this sense, for the LCPF Lime Street acted as somewhat of a 'moral barometer' for the rest of the city, both in terms of prostitute activity and policing responses to it. The second largest sub-district for prostitute arrests in 1918 was in London Road (18%) and its adjoining streets (a further 8% of arrests). The main shopping thoroughfares of the city – Lord Street and Church Street – saw 6% and 3% respectively of the total arrests, whilst Pitt Street in Liverpool's Chinatown saw 2%. To ascertain whether the distribution of arrests according to locality was a proportionate reflection of prostitute or police activity, both or indeed neither, is an inherently problematic if not impossible task. One way of making sense of this geography, interestingly, is to look at the areas which were free from arrests. As Map 1 indicates, there were no arrests against prostitutes in the Scotland Road area in 1918, the working-class residential quarter which bordered onto the docks and where many of the city's lodging houses and sailors' homes were located. This is not to say that prostitution was necessarily absent from this area as Everett claimed to the SOC in early 1928, a point I will return to in chapter six. No doubt for the LCPF concerns over 'moral miasma' and visibility would have been of less significance and/or urgency in the context of Scotland Road, a mark of how the vice of prostitution and the prostitute was frequently contingent upon its spatial organisation and practice. Thus prostitutes who plied their trade within the commercial and entertainment hubs of the city were probably more likely to incur an arrest than a woman who worked in less 'respectable' and publically accessed parts. Similarly, just as Caldwell and Everett had both insisted, there was seemingly little prostitute and/or police activity on and around the docks in 1918. As Map 1 illustrates, arrests only occurred in two localities around the docks, on Georges Dock Pier Head and at Georges Dock Gates.



However, the proportion of arrests made at Georges Dock was extremely low, accounting for just 0.7% of arrests made in 1918. Again, this is not to suggest that prostitution on and around the docks did not take place more frequently than the arrest returns imply, although it is likely that the gated and manned nature of the docks was probably working to adequately curtail prostitution within this vicinity. Even in the midst of the Great War with a surge in the number of ships arriving into Liverpool, the city seemingly experienced no ‘special’ problems in relation to its status as a port city.

Interestingly, the spatial organisation of prostitution and policing did not remain static across the research period. Whilst throughout the 1920s the number of arrests decreased year on year, there was a proliferation in the geographical spread of prostitution across the city. So, as noted above, in 1918 prostitution arrests were made in 99 different locations, a figure based upon the 938 arrests traceable within the court registers. By 1922 arrests occurred at 145 different locations although the total number of arrests (traceable) had reduced significantly to 559. In 1926 the proportion of arrests to localities remained similar to that which it had been in 1922 with 382 traceable arrests taking place at 98 locations. By 1930 the geographical spread had extended once more, with 83 traceable arrests being made across 39 different locations.<sup>7</sup> Whilst in 1918 the top ten streets for arrests accounted for 76% of the total arrests made in that year, by 1926 the proportion of arrests made in the top ten streets had reduced to 60%. And, whereas in 1918 just 2.7% of arrests took place outside the confines of Map 1, by 1926 9.7% of arrests took place outside of Map 2. So, what can this change in the coverage and concentration of arrests tell us? Did it signify a change in prostitution practice or policing? The answer is that it probably reflected both. Nowhere more vividly was this change played out than in the locality of Lime Street. As Map 1 illuminates, Lime Street was the location in which most prostitute arrests took place in 1918, accounting for 35% of the year’s total arrests. Indeed, over the following decade this street remained the top location for arrests, although crucially the share of arrests here was consistently retracting. In 1922, arrests in Lime Street accounted for 23% of the year’s total arrests, and in 1926

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<sup>7</sup> Given the low numbers of arrests made throughout the 1930s it would be misleading to include data from the decade within this evaluation.

this proportion had been reduced again to 21%. By 1930, Lime Street no longer experienced the biggest share of arrests, falling to the equal fourth most prolific street alongside Mount Pleasant with just 7% of arrests behind London Road (13%), Ranelagh Street (10%) and Pembroke Place (8%). And, in 1934 no arrests were made in Lime Street at all, although it is important to remember only ten arrests were made in relation to common prostitutes across this year (See Map 3). Evidently, as the geographical data illuminates, Victorian associations which had positioned Lime Street as *the* hub of prostitute activity in Liverpool – which in turn continue to inform popular conceptualisations of the city’s history of prostitution - were dissipating at this juncture. Of course, whilst it is likely that the proportion of arrests taking place in Lime Street in 1918 were propelled by the special conditions of war – in particular the growth in the size of the transient male population passing through and/or taking up temporary home in the city – the trajectory of decline across the 1920s and into the 1930s was undeniable. Given that it was in the interest of the LCPF to proactively manage prostitution activity within Lime Street (as discussed above), it is probable that this shift signified that the area was increasingly falling out of favour with professional prostitutes. Understanding why this change took hold is complicated by the fact that overall rates of arrests were significantly dwindling at this time, but by considering the changing geographical dynamics across the research period – i.e. where arrests were appearing for the first time and/or proliferating – may hold some answers. Firstly, if we look at the coverage of arrests detailed in Map 2 for the year 1926 it is clear that a number of significant changes had taken place since 1918. Most notably there were no arrests made on or immediately around the docks by 1926, whilst Pitt Street in Chinatown which had been the 9<sup>th</sup> most prolific street in 1918 with 2% of arrests saw no arrests. In fact, there was not a single arrest made throughout the whole of the Chinatown district in 1926, whereas in 1918 the majority of its streets had witnessed arrests. Interestingly, the absence of arrests in the dock area and the Chinese quarter may have been influenced by broader shifts taking effect at this time. For example, by the mid-to-late 1920s the volume of ships docking in Liverpool was considerably lower than the high levels experienced during the war years. This coincided with a serious retraction in the city’s maritime industry as Liverpool lost its footing as Britain’s leader in passenger and commercial trade to other domestic ports, whilst the global depression of the late 1920s provided another catastrophic blow to this already fractured economy (see chapter eight).

Thus, it is likely that as both the transient seafaring and local docking male population diminished the demand for prostitutes within this area waned accordingly. By the interwar period, Chinatown was an area in crisis. Whilst it was estimated that there up to 1,500 Chinese men based in Liverpool during war, by the early 1930s this number was believed to have been reduced to “no more than a few hundred souls.”<sup>8</sup> Indeed, those remaining in the streets surrounding Pitt Street lived in constant fear of the Corporation’s plan to demolish the entire area, an intention which as Belchem and MacRaild have observed was “subsequently completed by Luftwaffe bombing” (Belchem and MacRaild 2006: 380). Ironically, the decline of Chinatown in many ways signalled the ease with which this cohort of old Chinese sailors had integrated into and been accepted by the ‘indigenous’ population. As inter-racial marriages proliferated, their Anglo-Asian children and grandchildren tended to settle in areas outside of Chinatown. Thus, as an exclusively male immigrant group (there were very few female Chinese settlers between the wars) , “it seemed inevitable that, as the old men died, Liverpool’s Chinatown, such as it was, would die with them.”<sup>9</sup> It was probably no coincidence that conceptualisations which had once ‘demonized’ Liverpool’s Chinese men as sexually deviant predators and opiate dealers were undergoing something of a “rehabilitation” at the very time Chinatown and its populace were in crisis. By the early-to-mid 1930s concerns which had earlier provoked and been propelled by the race riots of 1919 – specifically fears that Chinese sailors were prizing the local population out of jobs and issues surrounding Anglo-Asian miscegenation - had largely dispersed, to the point that this group were now portrayed in a comparatively favourable light. Nowhere was this shift more patent than in the Liverpool Association for the Welfare of Half-Caste Children 1930 report penned by M.E. Fletcher; *Report on an Investigation into the Colour Problem in Liverpool and other Ports*. As Bland, Belchem and MacRaild have all observed, the “virtue of the Chinese” in Liverpool was established in stark polarisation to the “vice and ‘real social menace’ of the ‘negro’” (Belchem and MacRaild 2006: 379; Bland 2005:49). The report argued that “the Anglo-Chinese community” presented “no serious problem”, frequently corroborating with ideas emerging more broadly which presented Anglo-Chinese children as particularly ‘intelligent’ and ‘well-adjusted’, whilst Chinese husbands

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.halfandhalf.org.uk/fww.htm> (accessed 10th January 2012, 13:00 hours).

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.halfandhalf.org.uk/fww.htm> (accessed 10th January 2012, 13:00 hours).

were seen to be 'industrious' both in the domestic sphere and the workplace (Broody 1955: 68). This polarisation between the Chinese and the black male in Liverpool was articulated again four years later in Jones' *Social Survey*:

"Each community comprises about 500 adult males. In both cases, there has been widespread inter-marriage and cohabitation with white women. Here the resemblance between the two groups ceases. The Chinese appear to make excellent husbands and there is little evidence of any of their families falling into poverty, but the same cannot be said of the negroes and their families. The half-Chinese children on growing up find little difficulty in obtaining work or in entering into marriage with the surrounding white population. The girls in particular are attractive and good-looking. On the other hand, the Anglo-negroid children when grown up do not easily get work or mix with the ordinary population" (quoted in Broody 1955: 69).

It was also probably no coincidence that prostitution arrests were absent in this area from the mid-1920s onwards. Whether this reflected a diminished demand for prostitutes as the population of Chinatown floundered, the LCPF's reluctance to police a district which to all intents and purposes had become a ghost-town, and/or the police's alleviated concerns regarding the sexual interaction of white women with Chinese men is unclear. The observations made by the LWPP which are considered in the following chapter, it is argued, go some way to explain why the arrests of professionals in Chinatown ceased.

So where were arrests occurring in 1926? In many ways the localities of the top ten streets for arrest were fairly consistent with those in 1918. London Road remained the second most prolific street with 11% of arrests, with a further 9% taking place in its adjoining roads. Again the commercial shopping quarter was the third most prolific area, with 5% of arrests occurring in Ranelagh Street, 3% in St Johns Lane, 3% in Lord Street and 2% in Church Street. However, there was one significant change which had taken place since 1918, and this was the spread of arrests up into the Georgian quarter of Toxteth to the north-west of Lime Street, an area which encompassed the university complex and housed many of Liverpool's wealthiest citizens. In fact, by 1926 the

same proportion of arrests occurred in Bedford Street (2%) in the heart of the Georgian quarter as they did in the shopping district of Church Street. By 1930 this shift was further solidified with 4% of arrests taking place in Upper Parliament Street, the road which ran northwards from the Anglican Cathedral through the centre of the Georgian quarter. Interestingly, in 1957, Richard Whittington-Egan the Liverpool born crime historian observed this shift in 'The Red Light District' a chapter from his *Liverpool Roundabout*:

"Twenty- even ten – years ago, the name of Lime Street was famous throughout the world. Wherever seamen went it was pronounced with a knowing wink. But the vice lights of Lime Street are now dimmed ... To-day, a handful of raddled prostitutes still haunt its darker reaches where the shadows are kind to harsh lines of ageing faces, but I have discovered that prostitution has fanned out from its old centre to the suburbs. Liverpool's number one picking-up ground nowadays, is that once genteel area of fine old houses around Catharine Street, Canning Street, Huskisson Street, Chatham Street, Grove Street, Falkner Square and Parliament Street..." (Whittington-Egan 1957: 286).

As the evidence detailed in the court registers suggests this shift in activity away from Lime Street and up into Toxteth – the area Whittington referred to as "little Lime Street" - had already begun to take hold in the interwar period (ibid: 286). Whittington accredited two key factors for the facilitation of this change. Firstly, he argued that the increasing "bebies" of "doxies" and "immoral amateurs" who "are not really professional prostitutes at all" were prizing the professional out of Lime Street, the area which has "for many, many years been the preserve of their strictly professional sisters" (ibid: 285). Just as in the mid-1930s Gladys Hall had observed how amateurs were "deplored by the professional prostitutes" for their "intrusion into the prostitute's sphere," a little over twenty years later Whittington similarly noted how amateurs were "despised by the prostitute proper" (Hall 1932: 24; Whittington-Egan 1957: 286). The accuracy of this notion of 'intrusion' and how exactly it impacted upon the shifting sexual geography of prostitution in interwar Liverpool is something which is picked up in the upcoming section on amateur prostitution, although it appears to be both a feasible explanation for change and one that was

actually had its antecedents in an earlier time than the existing literature suggests. Secondly, Whittington attributed the growth of car ownership as the other major factor in the spread of prostitution away from the city centre and out into the suburbs via Toxteth and its thoroughfares, namely Upper Parliament Street and Prince's Boulevard which connected the edge of the city centre to the great parks of South Liverpool namely Sefton Park and Prince's Park:

“There, any night of the week, you can see tell-tale cigarettes glowing in the entrances to dark alleys. Nor is the trade by any means confined to the masked hours of darkness, for in the broad light of afternoon I have watched numbers of cars circling the streets to pick up the women who shamelessly exhibit themselves for hire on the corners. And around ten o'clock in the evening the shoals of street-women cluster the pavement edge, waiting under the orange lights of Prince's Boulevard for the 'car trade' that is plied among the motorists driving home after an evening out in town ... Mostly they accompany their clients in their cars, which drive into nearby Sefton or Prince's parks, but some take their customers back with them to rooms which they use for professional purposes (but do not necessarily occupy) ...” (Whittington Egan 1957: 287).

The growth of prostitute activity and/or arrests in Toxteth probably also reflected the LCPF's desire to curb the presence of prostitutes in this 'respectable' area of the city which had traditionally been the home of Liverpool's wealthy mercantile population. Additionally, it was probably no coincidence that the University of Liverpool campus was located in this part of the city. As professionals sought to distinguish themselves from the services offered (or rather not offered) by the amateur, and were increasingly competing with amateurs for the custom of sailors in the Lime Street area, perhaps the male student populace located in Toxteth presented a viable commercial alternative. Indeed, as Howell's research on the sexual geography of prostitution in Victorian Cambridge has illuminated, there has long been a tendency for prostitutes to capitalise upon the large, concentrated body of young, single males within university towns and locales; “In the streets, these women became nuisances, pawing undergraduate (or 'gownsmen'), pulling their gowns, interrupting their strolls, and damming the free flow of the streets' respectable

‘passengers’” (Howell 2000: 382). As Hall has noted in her observations of Stopes’ correspondence with the public in matters of sexuality and sexual health, it was not unusual for men to use the services of prostitutes during their pre-marital student days; “When I was at the University at home I used occasionally to go with prostitutes” (Hall 1996: 59). The physical layout of Toxteth also afforded prostitutes certain advantages which other parts of the city, particularly Lime Street, did not. Its many poorly lit back streets and entries provided a certain degree of seclusion which could not be found in the city centre, and it is hardly surprising that many women used these spaces to fulfil their sexual transactions with their clients. For example, in 1926, 60% of arrests made under the VA which referred to an actual act of carnal connection were located in the entries and back streets of Toxteth. Importantly, visible deviance was not only judged in accordance to the spatial execution of prostitution, but rather appears to also have been contingent upon time. In 1926, for example, Saturday represented the day in which the highest proportion of arrests were made, with this day accounting for 21% of all arrests made in the year. Again, it is difficult to ascertain whether this signalled an increase in police or prostitute activity on this day, a higher male demand, or all three, but it is probable that the LCPF placed a premium on cleaning the streets on the days of the week when Liverpool’s ‘respectable’ citizens descended upon the city centre.

In his attempt to “debunk the notion that police work is about crime,” Brogden has argued that the mandate given to interwar constables to “keep the Liverpool streets clean” made them more akin to “uniformed garbage-men” (Brogden 1991: 2). By plotting the sexual geography of professional prostitution it has been possible to uncover how certain areas and streets were more important to keep clean than others. This exercise has also served to challenge some of the persistent assumptions connected to Liverpool’s status as a port city, not least the belief that prostitution was rife on the docks and that Lime Street represented the hub of activity throughout this period and beyond. As we have seen, the geography of professional prostitution was constantly in flux, yet at any given time this geography was constructed out of the complex intertwining of changing police policy and prostitute activity, fluctuating levels of demand, technological advances, as well as the functionality and topography of districts. As the upcoming section on

amateur prostitution examines, such shifts may also have been indicative of the changing dynamics of street prostitution in interwar Liverpool.







Map 2





### **(5:5) Corruption**

“To merit and retain the confidence of the public must be the earnest endeavour of every policeman. Without it he is only a big man with a stick, only one against thousands, but with it he has at his back every citizen worthy of the name.” [Sir Leonard Dunning, *LCPF Instruction Book*].

As the section above has illuminated, the process of policing prostitution on the ground frequently veered from the minutiae of the *Instruction Book*. The personal vagaries and attitudes of rank and file officers, the reliance of the law upon police interpretation and discretion, and the policy of spatial and behavioural management, all combined to cultivate a complex culture of prostitution control which could range from lenient to overzealous moments of policing. However, there is an important distinction to be made between the inevitable nuances of law enforcement and the outright abuse of power by officers for personal gain and gratification. Hitherto, the historiography of interwar prostitution has largely focussed upon police corruption from an ‘institutional’ perspective whilst the geographical lens has been firmly fixed upon incidences within London. The high profile scandals which gripped the public’s attention during the 1920s – as discussed in chapter three – have been utilised by scholars such as Slater in order to delineate a skewed CJS whereby multi-agency collusion worked to exonerate important and privileged men, and in doing so unjustly treated prostitutes (Slater 2007a). Although such cases are significant, they do nonetheless speak of the atypical. As Emsley has contended, prostitution provided ‘Bobbies’ “with opportunities for corruption” on a daily basis (Emsley 2009: 218). Klein’s recent study on the working lives of police constables in early twentieth century Liverpool, Manchester and Birmingham has begun to turn this tide. (Klein 2010). By drawing on the disciplinary reports of these forces, she has demonstrated how improper conduct by constables – both during work and leisure time – left them liable to severe disciplinary charges from their superiors, and in this sense as Brogden has similarly argued “policing involved facing both ways” (Brogden 1991: 1).

On 11<sup>th</sup> October 1928, Sir Leonard Dunning – a former CC of Liverpool and since 1912 one of the Inspectors of Constabulary for England and Wales – gave evidence to the Lee Commission, the inquiry into police powers set up by the Home Secretary following the Savidge scandal and whose findings led to the imminent appointment of the RCCPP. Reciting the above words penned in the opening dictum of his *Instruction Book* for Liverpool, neither Dunning nor the Committee could ignore the irony that just a few months earlier ten LCPF constables had appeared in court facing charges of police bribery, corruption and conspiracy in connection to street betting. Initially, the case had gripped the nation's attention because of the scale of officers involved. By the time court proceedings had drawn to an end it was the 'leniency' of the penalty issued to the ex-constables – nine of whom were found guilty of conspiracy – and were 'bound over', whilst the bookmaker Thomas Campbell who had been bribing the constables was sentenced to three years imprisonment, that caused public and political anxiety. Dunning was particularly distressed by this case and was "personally sorry the judge did not send all the offenders to goal" (*LDPM*, 17 October 1928). Liverpool was now not only seen to have a corrupt police force, but a judicial system which was prepared to 'tolerate' such inappropriate behaviour by the men who frequently legislated the behaviour of others. This case could not have happened at a worse time for the city, coming to light as the proceedings of the SOC were well underway and shortly before the establishment of the Lee Commission and the RCPPP. Indeed, although in theory the betting scandal had no relevance to the policing of prostitution in Liverpool, various members of the SOC committee and witnesses talked in a way that suggested there was a link between police taking bribes from bookmakers and taking bribes from prostitutes. For example, the Bishop of Durham said of "the trouble of the police force in Liverpool" that it "gives a certain amount of verisimilitude to the belief that bribery is not unknown" (*TT*, 3 December 1927).

Yet, the evidence from the SM, the CC and the police constables themselves all concurred that "there wasn't the money for bribes from them [prostitutes]" (see Brogden 1991: 129; TNA HO/326/7/10/1928; TNA HO/326/7/9/1928). Indeed, by consulting both the *Chief Constable's Daily Reports* and *Disciplinary Reports* for this period, it is clear that no action was taken against any member of the force with regards to prostitute bribes, although of course this does not

necessarily mean that it did not exist. On the other hand, what these reports do reveal is how in the early 1920s a culture emerged whereby young and new recruits to the LCPF were engaging in inappropriate relations with the city's prostitutes. In his evidence to the SOC, Everett had recalled how in the immediate aftermath of the police strike of 1919 there had been a few cases – “no more than two or three cases” – of wrongful arrest in the relation to the administration of the prostitution laws (TNA HO/326/8/27/1927-28). This, he said, was because following the dismissal of “some 900” men for striking (approximately 40% of the LCPF), “a young force was the result, so for some time regular street offenders were unknown to the men, and it is not surprising that mistakes were made” (ibid). Importantly, Everett failed to mention the ‘mistakes’ some young constables made in getting ‘too close’ to prostitutes, even though statistically such incidences occurred far more frequently than mistaken identity, and resulted in far harsher repercussions for those policemen involved.

Although in accordance to their professions the beat officer and the prostitute were polarised by their respective positions as regulator and regulated, the ways in which they patrolled the city's streets in order to carry out their ‘business’ had striking parallels. Inevitably, these shared spatial and surveillance techniques resulted in a close proximity between them, and as the case of Constable Massie demonstrates, could even lead to the forging of close acquaintanceships. On the 31<sup>st</sup> October 1920 Massie, a B rank constable who had been in service for one year, was dismissed from the LCPF following two charges against him for forming an unprofessional relationship with Cecilia Henderson, and two subsequent charges for lying to his superiors. The first charge read as follows; “that he was guilty of behaviour likely to bring discredit on the discipline and reputation of the force, in that, he being a married man, carried on and walked out with Cecilia Henderson, a single woman of doubtful character from sometime in August 1920 until 31<sup>st</sup> October 1920” (MPA LCPF/Daily Reports/1920). From the second charge it is evident that not only did policemen and prostitutes patrol the same streets, but on occasion they patrolled together; “on Saturday 30<sup>th</sup> October 1920, he allowed the said Cecilia Henderson to accompany him round his beat, on and off, from 6 p.m. until he went off duty at 2.10 a.m. on 31<sup>st</sup> October and that afterwards he walked with her to the address of her late employer at 32 Sandringham Road, Tuebrook, returning with her to

West Derby Road” (ibid: 1920). The marital status of constables evidently did not always provide the protection from temptation that Everett had hoped it would do.

The Massie case is fairly exceptional in that it denotes a sustained relationship between a constable and a prostitute and infers a degree of genuine affection, whereas typically these interactions were more fleeting and guided purely by sexual gratification. For example, Constable Milroy was called to resign in December 1926 after being found whilst on duty “off his beat in an entry between Lambert and Craven Street in the company of a prostitute named Mary Jones whom he had taken there for an immoral purpose” (ibid: 1926). Interestingly, the majority of disciplinary cases referred to constables actions with prostitutes when off duty. Between January 1920 and December 1926 there were thirteen disciplinary cases brought against policemen for improper relations with prostitutes, and eight of these cases referred to the conduct of men whilst off duty. It would appear that such policemen capitalised on the sophisticated knowledge of the city’s sexual geography they had garnered whilst on patrol, and perhaps used their status to issue prostitutes with sexual bribes whilst off duty. This clearly, however, did not prevent such misdemeanours from being noticed by their colleagues on duty. For example, in March 1923 Constable Rimmer was ordered to resign after three years service when found in a brothel at 11.40 p.m. by Sergeant Gordon. Whether someone had tipped the police off with regards to Rimmer’s whereabouts is not clear, but Rimmer was certainly surprised to see Gordon for on his arrival he asked “what the bloody hell do you want” (ibid:1923). For this outburst, he was also charged with insubordinate conduct to a superior. Interestingly, in the case of Bebbington and Scott from 1921, it would appear that having relations with a prostitute whilst off duty did not necessarily mean that policemen lost all sense of their professional duties in terms of policing such women, though as this case indicates playing both the police constable and the customer does not work. On 5<sup>th</sup> December 1921, Constables Bebbington and Scott were charged with the offence of “frequenting the company of prostitutes in Old Haymarket and Wilton Street” whilst off duty. Bebbington was fined 30/ which worked out at about 40% of his weekly wage. Scott, on the other hand, was dismissed because he had gone on to have “carnal connection with the prostitute Florence Johnson” and then about half an hour later decided to arrest Florence “without good and sufficient cause” (ibid: 1921). What

motivated Scott to arrest Florence is unclear. He may well have panicked on realising the error of his actions or it may well be an example of a police constable flagrantly abusing the power of his profession.

Although all these disciplinary cases infer a certain degree of the abuse of power, one case stands out for both the level of alleged aggression inflicted upon a prostitute by two constables and for the fact that the said offence came to light after the prostitute complained to the police. In December 1923, Catherine Cassidy a known prostitute made an allegation that a few nights earlier Constable Maguire had raped her in West Derby Road whilst Constable Bolton watched. She also claimed that Bolton then went on to accost her saying “I don’t want to have sex I only want to feel your breasts” (ibid: 1923). The outcome of the investigation was that “in view of entry information notebooks no charge can be sustained” (MPA LCPF/Discipline Reports/1923). Whether the constables notebooks placed them elsewhere at the time of the offence (and therefore this was a false allegation) or whether the LCPF were unwilling for such a serious and violent attack to come to light unfortunately cannot be deduced from the records.

Yet, what all these cases do reveal is that in the early 1920s it was not uncommon for police constables to instigate sexual relationships or relations with the very women they were meant to be regulating. This is not to say by any means that it was a tolerated culture, as the majority of punishments issued against those who breached the code of conduct indicate, nor that it was found amongst all types of police constable. Instead, there were a number of common factors which appear to have bore an influence on the actions of individuals. For example, the average time in service of men disciplined for prostitute related misdemeanours was just two years, which suggests that it was probably an issue of temptation specific to younger and newer constables rather than an endemic problem which enticed constables throughout the duration of their careers. Even more interestingly, 60% of these men had been recruited in 1919 when following the strike the LCPF had to hastily push recruits through training in order to replenish the force, with 30% joining the following year in 1920. Perhaps these figures are an indication that the recruitment process was compromised in the wake of the strike. However, these cases do speak of the exceptional as

opposed to the everyday. They probably say more about the mistakes of individuals at certain moments in their lives and careers than they do about a culture of corruption within the LCPF. And, as Klein has pointed out it is imperative “not to romanticize constables, either as ‘bobbies’ or villains” (Klein 2010: 10). Stepping out of line would have rarely been a common move for constables, for just like prostitutes they too had a living to make and were fully aware that their actions were liable to punishment from their superiors. They were not only the regulator, they were also the regulated.

#### **(5:6) Interpreting the statistics: A culture of concealment?**

The interpretative value of the official crime statistics has been a source of continued debate amongst historians. Indeed, even as far back as the late nineteenth century, judicial figures were engaged in heated dialogue over the value of the statistics, and in many ways pre-empted the contrasting positions adopted by subsequent scholars. In Liverpool, Nott-Bower held an opinion – perhaps unsurprisingly given the city’s reputation as the “worst town in England for prostitution – that would now be recognised as the ‘pessimistic’ view, arguing against “the absurdity of quoting such figures to prove superior morality” (Nott-Bower 1926: 142). By the interwar period, his successors took a more ‘positivist’ stance, using the figures to project an image of a city poles apart from its Victorian past, and in doing so contended that the statistics represented a “real genuine reduction” (TNA HO/326/7/9/1928). As the evidence offered within this chapter has illuminated, the analysis of official prostitution returns requires a particularly acute level of interpretative caution to be exercised. Firstly, the statistics detail the number of arrests made in any given year by the LCPF, as oppose to the rate of prostitution within the city. They can, therefore, only offer a conservative approximation of the number of prostitutes operating in interwar Liverpool and the frequency with which they solicited. As one interwar investigation noted:

“...since prostitution *per se* is not an offence against English law and the prostitution is not convicted unless she has infringed certain rules of decorum ... we can no more estimate the total number of prostitutes from these figures [conviction statistics] than we could estimate



the total number of motorists in England from the convictions for furious driving” (Royden ed., 1916: 6).

This has particular relevance given the tendency for constables to ‘move on’ prostitutes without taking official action and/or the advised practice of issuing a caution in the first instance before taking recourse to law. Moreover, as indicated previously the growing culture of ‘professionalised’ prostitution at this time reduced the proximity between the police and the “well-appointed” prostitute which no doubt played out within the declining statistics, yet infers that the statistics were more reflective of this shift rather than outright retreat. The criminal returns were not only indicative of localised policing practices or prostitution cultures, but as was the case nationally were shaped by broader events which lead to prostitution control being put in the spotlight, such as the SOC, the RCPPP, and high-profile scandals including the Savidge and Fitzroy cases. This correlation between ‘negative exposure’ on the national stage and ‘decline’ in the local statistical returns did not go unnoticed by contemporary observers, with the Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police stating in 1923 - in light of the recent Fitzroy case - how the statistics were already declining “on account of the extreme reluctance of Police Officers to take action which they feel may bring them into collision with the Magistrates, the Press, and the public” (TNA HO/45/21766/1929). A few months after the publication of the SOC’s findings, the Statistical Branch of the Home Office anticipated that across the country the statistics “will almost certainly be very considerably affected in future by the opinions expressed” in the report (ibid: 1929). In Liverpool, a city which had its fair share of broader – and prostitute specific – police corruption incidences during the 1920s, a premium was placed upon the cautious policing of prostitution at the very time the statistics began to decline dramatically.

Yet, it is not just an issue of how these figures are shaped or who is not included, but as Clement has said in relation to twentieth century American prostitution, those who are covered in the statistics “usually overrepresent [sic] certain kinds of prostitutes over others” (Clement 2006: 78). The LCPF’s preoccupation with the ‘visibility’ and ‘recognisability’ of prostitution – rather than the existence of it *per se* – as we have seen worked to target particular ‘shades’ of prostitute

whilst others were left relatively free from legislative intervention. Thus, those who appear in the registers typically refer to cases where spatially and/or behaviourally prostitutes have breached the bounds of appropriateness and toleration. On the one hand, we can read these women as representing the more boisterous, drunken and/or irreverent of Liverpool's prostitutes. Yet, given the 'gulf' which was emerging between the 'professional' and 'unprofessional' prostitute, and the ways in which they were policed, it is reasonable to speculate that the majority of women appearing in court were drawn from the poorer echelons of prostitution, those who did not have the financial means to conduct their trade away from the streets nor to dress in a manner deemed 'respectable'. One contemporary commentator argued that those prostitutes who received some form of legislative or social intervention signified those "who have even failed at prostitution" (*The Athenaeum*, 1918: 376). In interwar Liverpool, failure was not necessarily determined by individual inability, but by those who happened to fail in fitting within the LCPF's code of tolerable prostitution. Although, this is not to follow Nott-Bower and say that no use can be drawn from the statistics at all, or to imply that the overall trend was not one of decline and improvement. What is debatable from the evidence provided within this chapter is just how fast and far the statistics were actually declining. However, such points of interpretative caution reflect to some extent the inevitabilities and nuances of policing, it would be unfair to suggest that the statistics in the 1920s had been consciously distorted. By the 1930s the same could not be said.

As has become apparent over the course of this chapter, the bulk of evidence presented has been specific to the 1920s. This, it is important to point out, is not the consequence of skewed research, but rather reflects how during the 1930s prostitution appears to have gone off the radar both statistically and in terms of the attention the LCPF placed upon this category of crime in their annual reports and broader administrative records. In fact, by the end of the research period so low were the number of arrests being made in connection to prostitution by common prostitutes that it appeared in the LCPF's annual reports as an amalgamated category alongside brothel offences from 1937. In 1937, the combined total of these offences stood at 19, in 1938 at 20 and in 1939 at 18. Yet, in spite of these alterations in the formatting and presentation of these offences and the

colossal extent of decline such a move signalled, throughout the whole of the 1930s no mention was made in the annual reports of prostitution at all.

However, if we go behind the statistics and look at the individual cases involved, it becomes clear that the police were not simply operating in response to the changing patterns of the ‘professional’ but as an organisation the ways in which they choose to regulate her worked to actively manipulate the perceived extent of this form of deviancy. Drawing on the information detailed within the police court registers, it is contended that a key alteration in how the prostitute appeared in court from the late 1920s served to promote an exaggerated image of improvement, whilst the nature of this alteration implies that in spite of Everett’s claims the drunk and visible street prostitute still persisted.

Table 2

<b>Madge Peters</b>		
<b>Date of Offence</b>	<b>Nature of Offence</b>	<b>Penalty</b>
01/01/1926	Common prostitute loitering and importuning etc in Lord Nelson Street (TPCA)	14 days hard labour
	Drunk in Lord Nelson Street	Dismissed
20/06/1926	Common prostitute loitering and behaving in an indecent manner by having carnal connection off Mount Vernon (Vagrancy Act)	3 months hard labour
19/10/1926	Being a common prostitute did loiter and importune in London Road (TPCA)	14 days hard labour
	Drunk in London Road	20/or 11 days
	Wilfully damaging Constable McCauley’s police whistle in London Road	Charge withdrawn
<b>05/01/1934</b>	<b>Drunk and disorderly in Springfield</b>	<b>1 month hard labour</b>

Table 3

<b>Sarah Johnson</b>		
<b>Date of Offence</b>	<b>Nature of Offence</b>	<b>Penalty</b>
14/04/1926	Common prostitute loitering and importuning etc in Shaw Street (TPCA)	14 days hard labour
10/06/1926	Being a common prostitute loitering etc in Myrtle Street (TPCA)	14 days hard labour
19/10/1926	Being a common prostitute did loiter and importune in Lime Street (TPCA)	1) 14 days hard labour
	Drunk in Lime Street	2) 20/or 11 days
12/08/1926	Common prostitute loitering and importuning passengers for the purpose of prostitution in Dale Street (TPCA)	14 days hard labour
<b>16/01/1934</b>	<b>Drunk and disorderly in Gildart Street</b>	<b>1 month hard labour</b>
<b>26/02/1934</b>	<b>Behaving in an offensive manner whereby a breach of the peace might have been occasioned in Eastbourne Street (LCA)</b>	<b>40/or 1 month</b>

The above tables detail the offending histories of two habitual street prostitutes for the years 1926 and 1934; Madge Peters and Sarah Johnson. The nature and frequency of Peters' and Johnson's offending was fairly representative of the broader recidivist population during the 1920s (as examined further in chapter seven).<sup>1</sup> In 1926, Peters incurred three separate convictions for prostitution, two of which were dealt with under the TPCA and the other under the VA, whilst the TPCA offences had an accompanying charge for drunkenness and in one case a charge for damaging police property. The penalties issued against Peters' were also fairly typical of those experienced by women appearing in court facing these charges (as detailed in the conviction outcome graphs in chapter three), receiving 14 days hard labour for the solicitation offences, 3 months hard labour for engaging in carnal connection under the VA, a dismissal on one of the instances of drunkenness charge and a 20/ fine or option of 11 days imprisonment on default of fine for the other. Similarly, Johnson incurred four prostitution convictions in 1926, all of which were dealt with under the TPCA, with one accompanying charge for drunkenness. For each of the TPCA arrests she received 14 days imprisonment with hard labour, whilst a 20/ or 11 days penalty was levelled against her for the drunkenness offence. It is highly likely that both of these women were well known to the police and magistrates as habitual prostitutes, with Peters appearing in court for common prostitution misdemeanours no less than 18 times between 1918 and the start of 1934 based upon the sampled years, and Johnson appearing on 8 occasions. However, by 1934, neither Peters nor Johnson were being dealt with as common prostitutes in court. In fact, Peters' last conviction – again based upon the sampled years – as a common prostitute was received in 1930, and Johnson's was in 1926. In 1934, Peters' was arrested for being drunk and disorderly, and Johnson was arrested twice, once for being drunk and disorderly and once under the LCA for 'offensive behaviour whereby a breach of the peace might have been occasioned', the term we know to have been used to specifically denote instances of solicitation by unknown women. These alterations are significant on a number of levels. Firstly, why were women who had extensive offending trajectories as 'common prostitutes' being arrested as 'unknown women'? And secondly, why were such individuals now receiving lengthy prison terms of 1 months hard labour for drunkenness which was not a prisonable offence?

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<sup>1</sup> Peters incurred 18 convictions as a common prostitute between 1918 and 1930 based upon the sampled years, whilst Johnson incurred 8.

These are not exceptional cases. Their criminal profiles are fairly representative of how women known to be ‘common prostitutes’ were less likely to be arrested as such by 1934 – this was the year crucially where only 10 arrests were made against ‘common prostitutes’ - yet at the same time were receiving far harsher penalties for the crime recorded against them. If we look at all offences committed by women brought before the court for the first three months of 1934 an interesting pattern emerges. There were just two instances of prostitution. Yet, of the 30 other offences committed by women during this period dealt with in court number three – 20 counts of drunk and disorderly, 3 counts of unknown women soliciting under the LCA, 2 counts of ‘being a vagrant wandering about without visible means of subsistence’, and 5 counts of ‘wilfully and indecently exposing her person by having carnal connections’ – I have traced 25 of them as having previous convictions as common prostitutes, and 2 more with previous convictions as ‘unknown’ women soliciting. Was this but a coincidence, or was something contrived happening in terms of either how prostitutes were being arrested, the charges they were appearing in court for and/or the charges recorded against them in the court registers?

It is conceivable that these women were indeed no longer involved in prostitution and/or that the police were now exercising a less arbitrary system of prostitution control in light of the public and political attention which had centred upon the policing of this category of feminine sexual crime in the previous decade. However, this does not explain why such disproportionately harsh sentences were being issued. The case of one woman from 1934 it is argued, holds the answer, and sheds light on an informal policy of concealment that appeared in Liverpool from the mid-1930s. On the nineteenth February 1934, 38 year-old Fanny Kessler was arrested in Lime Street for being ‘drunk and disorderly.’ The adjudication in the court registers recorded that she received a ‘dismissal’ for this offence. Taken at face value, this entry seems like any other straightforward case of public disorder recorded in the registers. However, on investigating the records of the Liverpool branch of the Jewish Association for the Protection of Girls and Women (LJAPGW) – the voluntary body who carried out welfare work in relation to Jewish females in Liverpool (see chapter six) – their notes on Fanny Kessler record an additional offence. She was accompanied in

court by Miss. Ettinger, the person in charge of welfare matters for the LJAPGW, including representing Jewish girls in court in a capacity very much akin to the police court missionary. And, it is Ettinger's notes from this particular case which contain a crucial fragment of information. According to the entry recorded in the LJAPGW's case books, Kessler was in fact arrested and/or tried for two offences on the nineteenth February 1934, the 'drunk and disorderly in Lime Street' offence which was detailed in the police court registers and the offence of 'soliciting two men by the Crown Hotel, Lime Street'. The information referring to adjudication noted, 'dismissed with a caution and warned if she came here again she would be severely dealt with.' Kessler's case appears to confirm earlier suspicions that Liverpool's CJS were cultivating a system whereby women who committed prostitution offences were actually being recorded in the court registers under the pretext of other public disorder misdemeanours. This would certainly explain why women were receiving such disproportionate and severe punishments for public disorder offences including drunkenness by this time, whilst Kessler's relatively lenient treatment in the court probably derived from her small criminal record and the interception of the LJAPGW in providing after-care (a point I return to in chapter six).

Why this change occurred is unclear. There was no change of policy detailed by the police themselves in the annual reports, the Instruction Books or the Standing Order Books, nor any legislative amendments. Given the harshness of the sentences issued to women known as common prostitutes it would appear that it was a combination of reasons. Firstly, it enabled the Liverpool's CJS to project an image of a city in control and largely void of this social evil. Secondly, it was a tactic through which the police could avoid accusations of heavy-handed policing against prostitutes and the embarrassment of wrongly arresting innocent women for prostitution, both of which had featured heavily during the proceedings of the SOC and the RCPP. Thirdly, and most crucially, such tacit alterations in the recording of crimes after proceedings had been carried out gave them the ability to maintain sufficient levels of legislative control over and punishments against prostitutes. Exposing this manipulation of the statistics clearly questions how far Liverpool had really moved away from the legacy of its Victorian past, whilst illustrating how desperate it was to do so. Just as the professional was literally moving her trade away from the streets to less

detectable spaces, the police were moving her criminality to less traceable areas within the statistics signalling a departure from earlier methods of classification. It is hardly surprising that the statistics underwent such a dramatic decline at this moment.

#### **(5:7) Policing the ‘good-time girl’ and ‘enthusiastic amateur’**

In 1932, Gladys Hall, a student of Liverpool University’s social sciences department noted that “the outstanding feature of present day prostitution in Great Britain is the reduction in the number of professional prostitutes and the increase in the number of amateurs” (Hall 1932: 24). In the immediate aftermath of the Great War, the police were keen to dismiss female promiscuity on its streets as nothing more than a temporary state deriving from the conditions of the war. For example, “the slackening of parental control” owing to the absence of many fathers away serving was noted as a contributing factor within the increasing practice of amateur prostitution, as was “the establishment in the city of the large Military Camp and numerous Military Hospitals, and the enormous number of members of H.M. and Allied Forces passing through the City” (LRO H352/2/WAT/1918). Indeed, whilst in 1918 CC Caldwell was optimistic that professional prostitution rates had been declining over the course of the war, he was perturbed about an increase of immorality in the streets involving young girls and women. However, reports from earlier in the twentieth century indicate that this was a phenomenon which had begun to trouble the LCPF long before the war. In 1906, the LCPF’s annual report stated;

“The knowledge of impurity among the young, and the opportunities for impurity are increasing; at night one sees in the streets and other places where people most do congregate many girls who, though they give the police no justification for interference, would be much better off elsewhere. These are not only the children of the slums, children of parents who themselves are thieves and prostitutes, but children too of parents who, respectably brought up themselves, nowadays will not or cannot exercise over their children the care which they received from their own parents ...” (ibid: 1906).

And, as this section goes on to illuminate, it is evident that such anxieties which the war had served to propel and focus did not dissipate following the Armistice. What had altered by the interwar period, however, was the role the LCPF played in the regulation of such behaviours. Back in 1910, the LCPF were of the opinion that “impurity” among girls in the streets was “strictly speaking...outside the province of the police” (ibid:1910). Whilst the LCPF had recognised in 1906 that “well-meaning people suggest that the police should do more than they do in warning girls seen about the streets at night,” they veered on the side of caution arguing how, “one mistake by a policeman, even honestly made, might raise such an outcry that the pendulum would swing over, and the one divergence from the strict line of duty might lead to the undoing of all the good which has been done strictly inside that line” (ibid: 1906). The enactment of the LCA in 1921 and the subsequent usages made of it to legislatively deal with the amateur over the course of the research period was evidence in itself that this cautious approach had now been abandoned. If on the one hand, this expanding terrain of feminine sexual deviancy fuelled the LCPF’s anxieties and extended their vocabulary regarding prostitute categories, then on the other hand, such anxieties – which as we have seen in Section Two increasingly underpinned political, legal and popular discourses of prostitution at this time – gave them the ‘legitimacy’ at this moment not only to be at the fore of policing crime, but to be in the front line of policing the individual’s sexual morality.

Indeed, throughout the period it was the amateur who received the greatest amount of attention and analysis within the police reports, described by Everett as “irresponsible, careless, ill-mannered young women and girls whose self respect is lacking” (ibid: 1928). Everett’s evidence to the SOC was dominated by the behaviour of the amateur above any other street offender:

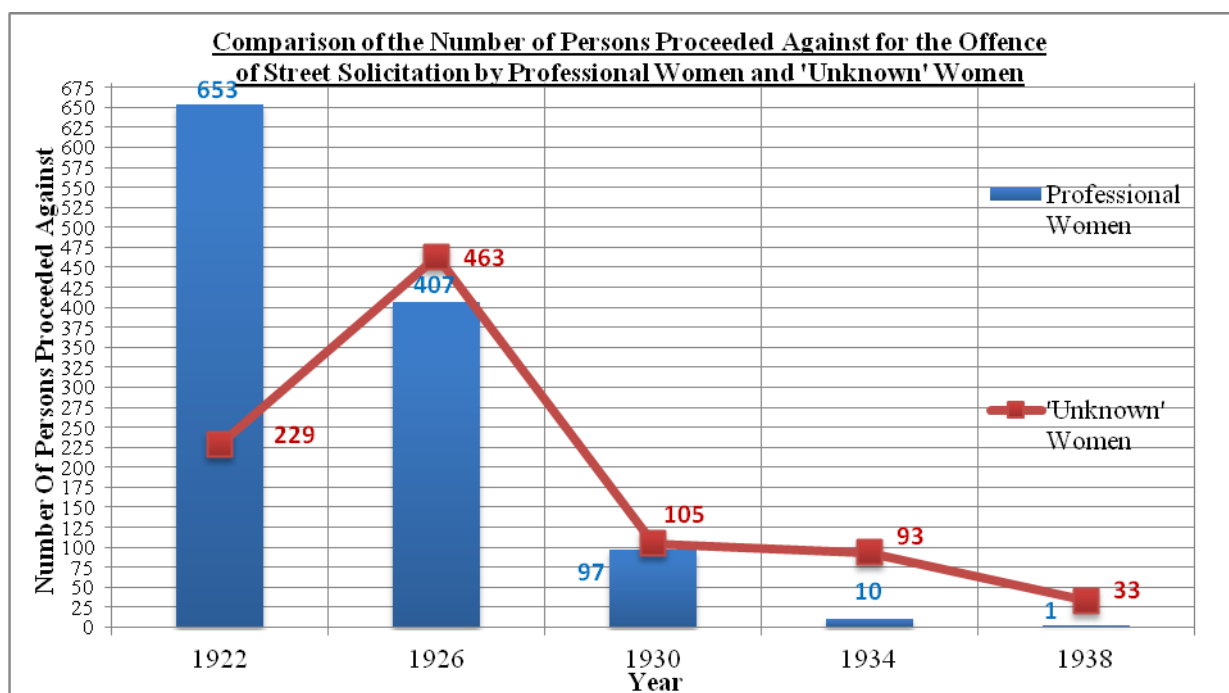
“There does exist that class of girl, usually quite young ... who is out for a good time ... she does not hesitate to introduce herself to her contemporaries of the opposite sex ... the purpose is more often than not for the sake of getting all she can in the shape of meals, drink, and entertainment” (TNA HO/326/8/27/1927-28).



That Everett took this opportunity which was intended for discussing the legislation of common prostitutes under the current solicitation laws to concentrate upon the questionable immorality of the amateur, speaks volumes about who he perceived to be of most concern within the hierarchy of feminine sexual vice. Whilst the LCPF were frequently mindful of the fact that the professional “too, had a living to make,” judgements of the amateur tended to focus – just as they had done so in the national context – upon her apparent greed rather than economic need; “[they] preen themselves for the purpose of attracting their contemporaries of the opposite sex ... for the sake of being treated to drink, refreshment, or entertainment,” and “trivial luxuries” (Brogden 1991: 124; LRO H352/2/WAT/1928). Moreover, at a time when the professional was seen to be adopting more subtle and respectable methods of solicitation, the conduct of the amateur was identified as particularly problematic. Hall noted how, “the method of the young amateur is usually more crude and obvious. It consists frequently of a noisy and demonstrative manner designed to attract attention ...” (Hall 1932: 31). Interestingly then, at times regulators and commentators alike mediated the vice of the professional by highlighting certain behavioural and motivational discrepancies between herself and the amateur. Given what we have established in chapter three with regards to the CJS’s attempts to protect young amateurs from the clasp of the ‘hardened’ professional, it would appear that the hierarchy of feminine vice was in constant flux.

Here, it is useful to draw parallels with Odem’s work on how sexological theorising impacted upon the ways in which promiscuity in early-twentieth century America was conceptualised. Her argument follows that as the Victorian discourse of female sexual “passivity” subsided, “social scientists and professionals reconceptualised the sexual behaviour of unmarried women, focussing agency, and thus blame, on the young women themselves”(Odem 1995: 480). In interwar Liverpool female accountability was so potent that behaviour deemed offensive or annoying by the police was an arrestable offence. Although the amateur could not be dealt with under the solicitation laws the imprecision of the LCA provided the LCPF with the power to legislatively deal with such behaviour. Indeed, the statistical returns indicate that the amateur was not only dominating police attention at this moment, but was superseding the professional within the criminal statistical returns.

**Graph 8**



In his evidence to the SOC, Everett provided a precise figure of the number of women charged with soliciting under the LCA for the year 1927, an offence which appeared in the annual statistical returns as a collective figure alongside other offences dealt with under the LCA. This figure was calculated at 411 charges whereas in the same year just 336 professionals were charged with solicitation or actual indecency. By understanding the specific phrase used in the court registers to denote cases of solicitation by amateurs and/or unknowns as revealed in Deacon's evidence – 'did behave in an offensive manner whereby a breach of the peace might have been occasioned in ...' – it has been possible to go beyond the collective published figure and calculate exactly how many women were dealt with in this way across the research period.

As Graph 8 above indicates, it would appear that Hall was correct in her supposition that amateur prostitution was having a material impact upon the declining rates of professional prostitution. From 1926 onwards, the number of women dealt with under the LCA for solicitation consistently, and often significantly, outweighed those being legislated under the solicitation laws, although the trend of the LCA did mirror the 'official' trajectory of decline from 1926, totalling at just 33 arrests by 1938. Once again we revisit this notion that prostitution offences were not necessarily declining, but rather they were appearing in less obvious – and traceable – areas within

the statistics. But where were these offences by amateurs occurring in geographical terms? Was it the case that the amateur was spatially intruding on the professional's terrain and thus in turn contributing to the changing sexual geography of prostitution noted previously in relation to the professional prostitution at this time and prizing her professional counterparts out of the market? When mapping the arrests of unknown women soliciting across the research period the overwhelming feature which emerges is that of the broad geographical spread of activity compared to that seen with regards to professional arrests. For example, in 1926 arrests against professionals took place in 98 locations whereas arrests against amateurs took place in 123 different locations. Again, the top ten streets for arrest in relation to professional prostitution in 1926 accounted for 60% of the annual arrests whereas the top ten streets for amateur arrests accounted for 52%. Not only was the coverage of prostitute and/or policing activity within the map more expansive in relation to amateur prostitution but crucially in 1926 15% of arrests against amateurs took place outside the confines of the map, compared to 9.7% of arrests made against professionals. In 1922, 3 of the top ten streets for arrests were outside of the city centre. Why exactly arrests against this cohort of prostitutes were geographically more expansive than arrests against professionals is examined in chapter seven. The purpose here is to ascertain whether amateurs were literally intruding upon the professional's operational sphere at this moment. As Map 3 indicates, a crucial distinction between professional and amateur activity is that there was some arrests of unknown women made in the dock vicinity and up into the Scotland Road area of the city, the very areas that Everett was keen to tell the SOC were free from solicitation. Indeed, amateur activity continued here throughout the period. Similarly, whereas professional arrests had ceased in Chinatown by 1926, arrests of unknown women continued here across the period, a perfect reminder of the complexities of prostitution and the importance of looking across the shades of prostitution. The rationale behind this distinction will be examined in chapter six. However, these areas did not denote the busiest areas for arrests. Interestingly, the areas of highest concentration of arrests largely mirrored those amongst the professional cohort (see Map 3). Lime Street remained the most prolific street for arrests throughout the period, whereas as we know from 1930 Lime Street was no longer the highest offending ground of professionals, at least in terms of arrests. Comparing the numbers of arrests between cohorts at Lime Street implies that there may well have been a case of

intrusion from the thirties. In 1926, 79 amateurs were arrested in Lime Street whereas 80 professionals were arrested here. By 1930, 25% of all amateur arrests took place here compared to just 7% of professionals, translating in numerical terms to 26 arrests compared to 6. The picture emerging here is a rather haphazard one, whereby at once amateur activity was far more geographical expansive than professional activity and occurring in places apparently free from professional activity. On the other hand, the hotspots for amateur arrests closely emulate those noted for professional prostitution, in turn suggesting that there was a case of intrusion. However, in chapter seven in light of the execution of the laws used to deal with soliciting in Liverpool this sexual geography is critically re-examined, and it may well be that this haphazard geography says more about the haphazard implementation of the law rather than prostitution activity.



Deila M. Powell  
Callies

*The Plan is divided into quarter Mile Squares*



Crucially, the legislative control of amateurs was not something the CJS were keen to publicise, not least because it dangerously blurred the parameters of appropriate and legitimate policing at the very time when the regulation of prostitution, never mind promiscuity, frequently incited public opprobrium and political interception. Indeed, when Everett talked about those women dealt with under the LCA in his annual reports and during the SOC proceedings he avoided explicitly referring to this class of offender as amateur prostitutes, although the inference was never difficult to trace. For example, when the SOC asked Everett about the “tendency now for the professional prostitute to be superseded by the amateur,” Everett’s responding description of the amateur drew on the very adjectives he consistently, and openly, used to describe the women dealt with under the LCA (TNA HO/326/7/10/1928). He described them as “flighty,” “out for excitement,” “what they can get without paying for themselves,” and “unknown women soliciting,” (ibid). Clearly the amateurs described above to the SOC were the same “irresponsible, careless, ill-mannered young women and girls who preen themselves ... for the sake of being treated,” who Everett detailed in his 1928 annual report as making up the 411 arrested under the LCA as unknown women soliciting in 1927 (LRO H352/2/WAT/1928). Liverpool’s CJS was certainly an institution mindful of the repercussions this controversial policy could incite, although ultimately such trepidations were regularly sidelined in their pursuit to proactively and effectively regulate the public behaviour and morality of the city’s female populace. In 1929, two young women experienced the encroachment this extension of the law had upon their civil liberties, as they made their way home from a dance. Rose Rogers a 19 year old margarine wrapper, and Sophia Tames a 21 year old glass grinder, briefly stopped to chat to a boy they knew for a few minutes. They then waved to a motor cyclist, who had called out “Hello Rose”, and following this spoke to a group of boys who had attended the same dance as them. At this point, they were arrested and charged with the offence of ‘annoying men.’ So outraged were the two girls by their arrest that they took the police officers to court for damages of wrongful arrest and false imprisonment. In court the police officer emphasised that he was not accusing them of soliciting, but so powerful was the insinuation that this was somewhat irrelevant. The defence for the girls argued that “so careful was the law of this country of the invasion of individual liberty that it was not a technicality that made the police

officer liable, but it was part of the law. If people were talking in the streets to brothers, cousins or friends, and could be arrested and taken off to the police station in this way then who was safe?" (*TT*, 19 October 1929). The two girls each received £30 in damages. This dichotomy between ideas of female sexual immorality and criminality in interwar Liverpool was often a conveniently ambiguous one. Even where, as this case demonstrates, there was no evidence of sexual motivation, and no complaint of annoyance made by the men, the law could be drawn upon at the discretion of the police, as it was in the case of the professional. Legal and moral accountability exclusively lay with the girls, in the same way that the professional was subjected to a legislative system based upon an intrinsic double standard which left her male clients blameless. Just as the term prostitute had dubiously been extended to include the amateur, the term amateur was now seemingly being used interchangeably with any young women socialising in public with the opposite sex.

With hindsight it is possible to trace these new forms of sexual and/or public female activity as paving the way for dating rituals which we understand of today as normal. The spaces of courting i.e. the cinema, pubs and restaurants, and the gestures of male suitors 'treating' their female companions to a drink, meal, or gift, have barely changed in over eighty years, thus making it all the more difficult to comprehend how such behaviour could have once not only been associated with prostitution but attracted the attention of the police and potentially result in legal punishment.

Yet, if the treatment of the professional was guided by the overarching desire to remove the visibility of prostitution – or at least that which was recognisable to the public – then the treatment of the amateur was far more complex. The actions of the LCPF demonstrated a shifting scale of control which moved between positioning the amateur as offender and victim. As previously discussed in chapter three, the legislative treatment of the professional was frequently driven by the desire to protect her younger counterpart – the amateur – from "being led astray," whilst measures such as those under the LCA which prevented young women from entering lodging-houses patronised by prostitutes also fitted into this policy of protection (LRO H352/2/WAT/1918). Interestingly, this process whereby the perceived deviance of women could be quickly absolved by

the pursuit to protect them, gained increasing currency in the 1930s as the LCPF focussed its attention upon the city's cafes and nightclubs.

In 1935, the CC spoke of an unnamed club in the following manner:

“One other club which was dealt with during the past year and which disclosed a particularly revolting state of affairs should be mentioned. The club was frequented by white, coloured and half-caste men and women. Nightly this place was the scene of excessive drinking, foul language, filthy conduct and dancing during which the grossest indecencies took place” (ibid: 1935).

Here, crucially, the LCPF failed to distinguish between the ‘type’ of women frequenting the club, nor did they clearly explain why this site was so problematic when a matter of years earlier they had been rather blasé towards what went on in the city's public houses, though it is probable that their anxieties centred on racial integration. As highlighted earlier, in interwar Liverpool the sexualisation of racial difference was acutely targeted towards black men, positioning them as predators from whom Liverpool's women needed protecting. As we shall see in chapter eight, theories which positioned prostitution as a trade in Liverpool overrepresented by women of certain national and ethnic heritage gained increasing currency during the 1930s, although the accuracy of such conjectures will be critically examined. For now it is necessary to turn our attention to the unofficial landscape of control in order to ascertain how prostitution was regulated in interwar Liverpool beyond the CJS.



## **Chapter Six: The Broader Landscape of Control: A Changing System?**

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### **(6:0) Introduction**

On Tuesday 7<sup>th</sup> June 1921, the Executive Committee of the Liverpool Female Penitentiary held a special meeting for the institution's trustees and subscribers at its Falkner Street residence. This meeting, it transpired, would be the last of its kind, for after over a century of opening its doors to Liverpool's prostitute women, a resolution was passed by the Committee marking its closure. Established in 1809, the Penitentiary relocated to Falkner Street in 1823 after outgrowing its original property in Edge Hill where since 1813 "applications for admission had to be refused for lack of accommodation" (LRO 364/FEM/2/1918). By the early twentieth century the Penitentiary stood as the oldest institution of its kind in Liverpool, and although it was not the city's only residential facility seeking to rehabilitate and reform prostitute women through long-term detention (typically two years), arduous domestic training, and varying degrees of moral and religious education, it was the only institution which dealt exclusively with the "reclaiming of prostitute women" (LRO 364/FEM/5/1919). As Bartley has noted, by the late Victorian period declining admission rates of prostitutes resulted in the diversification of the 'types' of women entering into such institutions, whilst others changed their tract completely and became "homes for single mothers" (Bartley 2000: 64). Scholarly research into what Weiner has called the 'semi-penal' sphere – a term used to denote those organisations which occupied a space somewhere between the

‘formal’ and ‘informal’ mechanisms of control - in the context of Liverpool has revealed that the majority of the city’s organisations had traditionally housed a broad remit of ‘criminal’ and ‘immoral’ women (Weiner 1990: 130). For example, in her work on the Lancashire Refuge for the Destitute (based within the city) in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Barton identified five categories of women ‘catered’ for within this institution – prostitutes, criminals, the ‘wayward’, inebriates and the ‘feeble-minded’- although she has rightly emphasised the problems of differentiation given that historically “these categories were not mutually exclusive” (Barton 2000: 160; Barton 2005). Similarly, Hughes’ research on the Convent of the Good Shepherd’s two reformatory homes at Ford and Wavertree, demonstrates how even where the aims of the institution were “primarily directed to the reclamation of prostitutes” in reality there was an “intricate interplay of sub-classes among the penitents” which saw prostitutes, convicts and inebriates being reformed side by side (Hughes 1985: 109 and 311). If the exclusive focus upon the prostitute made the Penitentiary *the* major cog within Liverpool’s apparatus of semi-penal prostitution control, then it also proved to secure its downfall.

The Committee’s resolution of closure came after the Liverpool Maternity and Child Welfare Sub-Committee (LMCWSB) notified the owners of the Falkner Street property – the Liverpool Corporation – that the Penitentiary was in breach of the lease conditions. The agreement drawn up in 1828 between the Corporation and the Penitentiary stated that the validity of the lease was intended for the “complete term of 1000 years without impeachment of waste if the same shall be so long wholly used for a penitentiary for reclaiming prostitute women” (LRO 364FEM/5/1919). The LMCWSB made no bones about the fact that were looking to take over the property for their Central School Clinic, and from 1919 made a series of loaded pleas to the Corporation to “become more reasonable” and show an interest “in the welfare of children and mothers” (ibid: 1919). Although the Corporation refused to engage in dialogue with the LMCWSB with regards to making distinctions between the ‘deserving’ and ‘undeserving’ recipients of charitable focus, they could not ignore the fact that statistically the Penitentiary was an organisation in crisis. By the time the Corporation issued an ultimatum to the Penitentiary in April 1921 to “remedy such breach within a reasonable time” or face closure, there were just two inmates, “neither of whom local women” (ibid: 1921). In 1918, the Penitentiary stated in its annual report that the “war seems to have

changed everything” (LRO 364/FEM/2/1918). Certainly, the declining number of inmates admitted to and residing within the Penitentiary correspond with this idea that the war had greatly altered the landscape of reform. At the time of the last census count in 1911, there were 39 inmates listed and six members of staff. In 1913 there was an average of forty women in residence at the home, with 49 admissions. However, by 1918 there was an average of just 12 inmates and only 11 admissions (ibid: 1918). The Penitentiary were keen to point out that this trend was not, in their opinion, a reflection of an “improved moral condition of the community” but rather of the temporary economic opportunities opened up to women during the war (see chapter three) and thus a reduced need for recourse to prostitution (ibid: 1918). They predicted that in the “near future” when “lucrative employment is not so easily obtainable” there would be “many more inmates” passing through their doors (ibid: 1918). Unfortunately for the Penitentiary these anticipations did not materialise, at least not quickly enough, with the plummeting numbers forcing the Committee to concede, “with deep regret,” to closure:

“...the Institution is not in a position to remedy the said breach, or to continue to use the dais premises in accordance with the terms of the lease, and hereby approves of the Corporation being permitted to re-enter upon the hereditaments [sic] peaceably” (ibid: 1921).

Over the course of its 112 year history, some 4845 prostitute women had entered the Penitentiary. What had once stood as a bastion of the nineteenth century landscape of prostitution control was now in the eyes of both the Corporation and the Penitentiary itself a redundant institution. But, how far was this closure an indication of a city ‘in control’ of prostitution and a world apart from its Victorian past? Were the dwindling numbers entering the Penitentiary – and indeed similar institutions throughout Liverpool – a reflection of the diminishing number of women engaging in prostitution? And, did the end of the Penitentiary mark the end of Liverpool’s established and extensive independent sphere of prostitution control beyond the judicial system? These are all questions and points of interest – which along with others - this chapter seeks to critically examine.

The focus of this chapter shifts from what may best be described as the ‘official’ regulatory responses to prostitution explored in the previous chapter, and towards what I call the ‘unofficial’ control of prostitution in interwar Liverpool. As a point of clarity, it is worth mentioning that the term ‘unofficial’ denotes those organisations that were void of any legislative powers, although as we shall see this does not necessarily mean that they were not ‘powerful’ or indeed recognised by legal bodies – namely the police and the courts – as significant. Using the closure of Liverpool Female Penitentiary as a point of contextualisation, and case studies of the Liverpool Women Police Patrols (LWPP) and the Liverpool branch of the Jewish Association for the Protection of Girls and Women (LJAPGW) this chapter is framed by three key arguments. Firstly, it is contended that the closure of the Penitentiary signalled a broader diminution within the reformatory sphere by the early twentieth century, and particularly following the Great War. This was not just endemic to the reform of prostitutes but rather can be traced in the retraction – or indeed alteration as the case may be and noted above by Bartley and elsewhere by Barton – of various institutions. In Liverpool, for example, the Mount Vernon Green Reformatory for Girls closed in 1916, followed by the Toxteth Park Reformatory for Girls in 1921 (see, for example, Rimmer 1986). Although, this is not to say that the reformatory sphere ceased to exist completely by the interwar period, as a leaflet distributed to social workers in 1915 demonstrated there were numerous institutions offering long-term rehabilitation programmes for women and girls in Liverpool, as well as temporary and nightly shelter. What is argued, however, is that the long-term detention of prostitutes for the purpose of reform and rehabilitation had fallen out of favour by this time (no mention was made on the social workers leaflet of the Penitentiary). This perception that reformatories represented an outdated model of social control at odds with contemporary “standards of freedom and of associations between the sexes” was also common among the responses made to the League of Nations 1936 survey into the rehabilitation of prostitutes from numerous towns in Britain (TNA PCOM/9/141/1931-39). The survey concluded in relation to reform, that, rehabilitation will never work “if it is to be combined with repression and old fashioned standards of living the cloistered life” (ibid). It would seem that by the interwar period the irony involved in seeking to reform prostitute women through a programme of domestic training given that a large proportion of prostitutes were believed to have been drawn from this labour sector had been duly noted. As early

as 1912 the suffragette Alison Neilans – who later became secretary of the AMSH – campaigned against the ‘futility’ of attempting to rehabilitate prostitutes through such arbitrary methods:

“We have no real place in the community for the ‘fallen woman’ – except the scrap heap – unless she can be satisfied with the wash-tub, the sewing machine, or in domestic service as a marked person ... The prostitute is degraded because we degrade her, we push her outside the more decent things in life, we trample her underfoot to prove our respectability ...” (Neilans 1912).

Indeed, the court proceeding outcomes for my sample years show that no referrals were made of prostitutes to any of the institutions listed on the 1915 leaflet. And, in a database of over 600 prostitutes less than ten were referred to any institution, and where they were such decisions (be it made by the court or the ‘unofficial’ agency involved in their case) were based upon personal circumstances rather than their activity as prostitutes. For example a small number of impoverished women were sent to Poor Law institutions, a few to mental institutions, and an even smaller amount to homes for unmarried mothers. There was no formal ‘Liverpool System’ to speak of akin to Mahood’s ‘Glasgow System’ whereby the judicial system was connected to the reformatory sphere by legislation, nor evidently was there any informal arrangement where the courts made use of the reformatory sphere rather than recourse to penal incarceration and the probation system (Mahood 1990). In spite of, or perhaps because of the retreat of the reformatory sphere, Liverpool’s ‘unofficial’ landscape of prostitution control continued to exist – and indeed expand - throughout the early twentieth century.

Secondly, therefore, this chapter argues that post-Victorian Liverpool witnessed the transformation of the ‘unofficial’ regulatory sphere, whereby emphasis was now firmly rooted with *prevention* as oppose to *reaction*. Thus, the methods and spaces of control altered accordingly, as organisations patrolled the city’s streets surveying women’s public behaviour with the hope that they could deter and/or intercept before the point of transgression, rather than responding after the point of transgression as had traditionally been the case with reform (although as we shall see

*prevention* is often a misleading term because such organisations regularly played a role in the prostitutes journey through the CJS and in their aftercare). As mentioned above, and discussed in chapter one, the reform system refused to be prized out of the regulatory landscape without a fight, with many reformatories rebranding themselves as preventative institutions for women who had not yet ‘fallen’ but were veering dangerously towards a life of iniquity. Some, such as Liverpool’s Magdalen Institution at Mount Vernon Green, had as early as 1906 equated ‘branching out’ with survival, calling for monetary donations from subscribers to facilitate them in setting up patrols to carry out “rescue work in the streets at night” (LRO H362/8/MAG/1906). Despite the sector’s willingness and aptitude to alter, the prostitute woman now represented an anomaly for reformers in the sense that she was at odds with their new focus upon the ‘unfallen’. Combined with what Bartley has suggested was through their readiness to move towards preventative work an admission of the “failure of these reform initiatives”, it was very rare to see prostitute women in reform institutions during the interwar period, at least because of their status as prostitutes (Bartley 2000: 2). An indication of how far this shift towards preventative patrolling and away from reactionary reform had taken hold by the interwar period can be seen in the ‘type’ of organisations Liverpool’s representatives giving evidence to the SOC were drawn from. There was, of course, Deacon and Everett who represented the city’s ‘official’ regulators, but interestingly there were three delegates who came from the broader ‘unofficial’ landscape of control. Miss Potter who was the Patrol Leader from the Liverpool Women Police Patrols; Miss Bathe who had worked between 1921 and 1923 for the Liverpool Preventive and Rescue Association; and Miss Cowlin who had recently retired from her position as Director of the Liverpool Women Police Patrols and had played an instrumental part in the development of the Patrols. Together, these women and their organisations signified how the social control of prostitution no longer meant removing prostitutes from their environments but rather exercising regulation through close supervision within their environments. In many ways, therefore, the ‘unofficial’ system of control complimented the methods of the ‘official’ regulators who, as we have seen in chapters four and six favoured a policing approach guided by monitoring and management and a judicial approach which made increasing use of the probation system and in doing so meant that punishment was – where appropriate and specifically for young and new offenders as oppose to ‘hardened’ offenders - carried out in the community as

oppose to in the penal environment. However, the new directive of preventative patrolling was not just fashioned as an alternative to a declining reform system. As changing understandings of *whom* exactly the prostitute was – or could be – took hold, the landscape of ‘unofficial’ control modified appropriately (although the appropriateness of such control is something I examine critically below) just as responses from the ‘official’ regulators had also done so (see chapter five).

Thirdly, therefore, it is argued that as a new vocabulary of feminine sexual vice emerged in the early twentieth century, and, increasingly popular, political and legal discourses of prostitution came to focus upon the amateur, prevention represented a more viable and useful tool of control than reform. In contrast to the narrow gaze of reform, prevention enabled regulators to adopt an extensive remit of control which dealt with the whole spectrum of prostitution from hardened professionals to amateurs, as well as the more generic ‘problems’ of promiscuous and/or inappropriate feminine behaviours. Although, as we shall see, the LWPP spent much of the interwar period lobbying for the attesting of female police into the LCPF, in reality the fact that the ‘unofficial’ regulators operated outside the sphere of legislative control made them in many ways more suitable – and legitimate – candidates for the control of this ever-growing catalogue of feminine public deviancies. Indeed, the LCPF were keen to apportion such responsibilities to, and capitalise upon, the resources of this regulatory sector, particularly as given as we have seen in chapters four and six the period was marked by a climate of political and public hostility towards instances of heavy-handed policing and the manipulation of the law. Moreover, free from the restraints of the solicitation laws, such organisations were able to construct their own regulatory policies, they could play multiple and often contradictory roles, and essentially tailor their trajectory to suit individual cases. Thus, as this chapter seeks to illustrate, the often ambiguous standing and approaches of these organisations worked as an advantage in, and complimented, the pursuit to regulate what was by the interwar period an ambiguous range of feminine public behaviours. Ultimately, it was no coincidence that an interesting dynamic emerged at this time whereby amateur regulators policed amateur prostitutes.

### **(6:1) The Liverpool Women Police Patrols**

“Women police are principally designed to save souls” (*HoC Debates*, vol.255, 30 July 1931, col.2614).

### **(6:2) The establishment of the LWPP**

The LWPP was established under the National Union of Women Workers (NUWW) in November 1914 amidst concerns that the city was already experiencing difficulties “arising from the excitement and moral dangers of street life” brought about by the conditions of war (*LEE*, 6 April 1935). Specifically, Liverpool’s status as a major port was understood to have led to “special dangers,” not least those posed by the “thousands of soldiers and sailors passing through” the city via its docks and setting-up temporary home in the various military camps located around its peripheries (LRO H364/5/WOM/1917). The influx of military troops coincided with a notable retraction in the capabilities of the LCPF as many of its personnel were posted away to the front lines. The founders of the LWPP, Mrs Lydia Booth and Mrs Edith Bright, had initially anticipated that their work would serve as a “temporary expedient” to protect the city’s women and young amidst these special conditions thrown up by the war (*ibid*: 1916). But, by 1917 having already carved out a reputation for itself amongst “civil and military authorities” as a “practical and powerful preventive agency,” the LWPP set its sights on more ambitious aims. They began to publicise their work as being of permanent “civic value” and as a “necessary adjunct to the official work of the civil police” (*ibid* 1916 and 1917). Indeed, Liverpool was certainly not unique in its establishment of such an organisation at this juncture. In 1917, there were estimated to be about 2,530 patrols working in 72 different areas of England and Wales, with further work being carried out in Scotland, Ireland and as far afield as South Africa (*ibid*: 1917). Yet, the history of the LWPP undoubtedly marks a particularly unique and fascinating tale in the broader history of women police and policing in the early twentieth century. Whereas the wartime work of women’s patrols in other urban areas of similar proportions had quickly led to women’s official inauguration into the regular police – in Bristol policewomen had been employed since 1916 and in Birmingham since 1917 – by the end of the war the patrols of Liverpool remained a reluctantly independent body (LRO 365/22/1/WOM/1924). The LWPP would have to wait some 30 years until 1947 before



women were officially attested into the LCPF. As it transpired, the anxieties surrounding the behaviour of women and young girls which had surfaced during the war did not dissipate following the armistice, and thus the LWPP continued to occupy a central, but always subjugated, role in the front line policing of public feminine sexuality. As we shall see, an interesting – though probably not coincidental – dynamic emerged at this moment whereby the growing emphasis placed upon amateur prostitution was matched by an increased apportioning of power to the amateur regulators of prostitution, most notably the LWPP. Similarly, in throwing light on this uncharted dimension of prostitution control, striking parallels can be detected in the gendered constraints experienced by both regulated and regulator alike.

### (6:3) The approaches and anticipations of the LWPP

In many ways the LWPP represented a middle ground somewhere between the nineteenth century reformatory and preventative work carried out in the city and the front-line approach taken by the LCPF in regulating public feminine deviancy. The LWPP quickly carved out a unique role for themselves with their ability to work across the regulatory spectrum as controllers, protectors and reformers. Indeed, the *Guide Book for Women Patrols* placed a premium on highlighting the distinct position they occupied by informing members that they should not regard themselves and their work as that of either rescue worker or police; “You should recollect you are *not* a rescue worker, but you should be in close touch with recognised rescue workers of the district...Recollect also that you are *not* doing police work” (LRO 365/22/5/WOM/n.d.). Unlike the police, the patrols understood themselves to not be “out to get cases but to prevent them” (LRO H364/5/WOM/1918). Yet, unlike nineteenth century preventative organisations their patrolling took them to the front-line of control, and it was in this capacity they understood their greatest power to reside. Without the power to arrest, ‘move on’ or take statements, their work centred around observing public behaviour, with the anticipation that their presence alone acted as a sufficient deterrent from young women and girls committing or falling victim to immoral acts:

“Our experience is, we are feared by those who are out for immoral purposes, and we are a warning (even when we do not speak) to youths and girls who are being approached by undesirable characters, and we actually deter both alike. They would go much further if we were not present” (ibid: 1923).

“Good-night now”, is a common phrase of both men and girls when they see the patrols’ watchful eyes on them. The men or girls often go off, glad to be relieved of the company more thrust upon them than invited. “All right, mother, I’ll leave them alone”, said a young sailor to a patrol, who was watching the efforts of two women to secure him. “Carry on, sister”, said a young soldier, abruptly leaving a woman of undesirable character” (ibid: 1917).

Indeed, their detachment from the law was, in their early days at least, seen to grant them a unique proximity to women and girls whereby they could simultaneously issue practical advice and “friendly warning” (ibid: 1919). Although they regarded their greatest work as the “silent work of warning and protection” on the streets, their activities did extend into the legal sphere – in the capacity of court representatives and informal probation officers – into the rescue sphere - with their own hostel for temporary shelter in Bedford Street as well as their duty to refer relevant cases to refuges and rescue homes” – and into welfare sphere – with their Cases Street office acting as a referral centre for individuals experiencing personal difficulties or worried about a friend or family member (ibid: 1919). The nature and range of the LWPP’s work is demonstrated in the following case-studies recorded in their annual reports:

“Two young girls (16 and 18) talking to a man in ... Street. He looked well dressed and they were very ordinary. The man left them and went into a sweet shop, and we spoke to the girls. They admitted they did not know the man ... advised them to go home. They did so, and gave names ...” (ibid: 1928).

“Two little girls found wandering at 11 p.m. near station – Taken to Shelter – Home visited by patrols that night. Mother and aunt found drunk and carousing with men and women. Cases handed over to L.S.P.C.C.” (ibid: 1917).

“Woman came to find patrols to ask advice about house she was lodging in; believed used for immoral purposes. Reported to police” (ibid: 1917).

“Woman came to beat purposely to find patrols to ask advice about niece, who was getting into bad company. Girl being visited” (ibid: 1917).

“A girl of 16 was brought to the office by her father on the advice of the police. She had been deceiving her employers and her parents for some weeks and sleeping in undesirable houses and indulging in promiscuous associations. She stayed at the Hostel while enquiries were made and is now in a Training Home where she is doing well” (ibid: 1933).

Ironically, it was the LWPP’s very ability to carry out as a single organisation the range of work traditionally performed by separate bodies which at once enabled them to quickly secure prominence in Liverpool but also hindered their absorption into the regular police. Although an independent and voluntary-based organisation, the patrols received an annual grant of £2000 from

the Watch Committee, “for the maintenance of 8 patrols” (LRO 365/6/2/WOM/1920). In light of this monetary support, it was decided in 1922 that it would be inappropriate for patrol members themselves to front the campaign for inauguration, and so in the March of that year the Liverpool Women’s Police Propaganda Committee (LWPPC) came into being (see Williams 2000: 132). However, it is clear that throughout the interwar period the women patrols continued to use whatever platform possible from which to propagate their legislative aspirations. For the LCPF and the Watch Committee, the unique “civic value” of the LWPP would be undermined by women’s official inauguration as police constables:

“I liken such an arrangement in its relationship to the police to that of the Red Cross Society to the Military on active service, in the latter case caring for the physically injured, and in the former the morally damaged, but as the Society forms no part of the fighting forces for obvious reasons, so the social work, valuable and essential as it is, should not be hampered by legal restrictions or other safeguards which are necessary for the police to comply with in their warfare” (LRO H364/5/WOM/1929).

In spite of the fact the LCPF were consistently complimentary of the LWPP’s work, and moreover their increasing tendency to apportion responsibility towards the LWPP as Liverpool’s prostitution culture moved away from the criminal and towards the immoral at this moment, they never diverted from their “firmly convinced” stance that the “method of unattached women patrols working in close contact with the police, but with the utmost freedom of movement, is the most practical and yields the best results” (LRO 10/84/WOM/1929). This opinion was not based upon the perceived ineffectiveness of the patrols but their aptitude; working alongside the police was deemed to be far more valuable than working amongst them. Yet, the LWPPC did garner a great deal of public support throughout the interwar period particularly from the local press who published a number of articles highlighting the public opinion that the LWPP were indispensable to the policing of sexuality. For example, the *Liverpool Daily Post* printed a letter of correspondence in 1927, in which the authors stated that “we believe that the employment of such properly-qualified women is necessary to protect especially the children of this city” and to police “the problem of sexual crime” (*LDD*, 2 July 1927). Similarly, the *Echo* published an article relaying the Archdeacon of Chester’s praise for the LWPP, agreeing that their work at keeping “the high spirits of adolescents within bounds”, particularly in the “unlighted areas which afforded opportunities for immorality”, was invaluable (*LE*, 10 June 1927). Whilst the LWPP’s reports understandably played

to their ‘success stories’ – something which had particular importance given their reliance upon the Watch Committee’s grant and their campaigns for inauguration – what was conveniently forgotten were incidences whereby the public expressed their disdain for the women’s descending upon their neighbourhoods and intervening in their lives, or that of their children and neighbours. For example, on their first visit to Scotland Road the patrol was pelted with stones by the residents, whilst terms such as “nosey parkers” and “busybodies” were frequently used to describe them (Williams 2000: 124). It is feasible that the working-class communities the patrols sought to ‘observe’ and ‘guide’ were particularly susceptible of a group of women who unlike the beat constables from the LCPF were drawn from a completely different social stratum. Indeed, at their first Annual Meeting, little attempt was made to hide the fact that this was primarily an attempt at class control, where they “emphasised the need of organising recreation, especially for the industrial classes, on a wider and more intelligent basis” (LRO H364/5/WOM/1916). Invariably, in focussing their efforts on street behaviour the LWPP were targeting the working-classes, and intercepting in what would have in other contexts be deemed as normative behaviour. For example, young working class couples who carried out their courtship practices in the streets were more susceptible to intervention from the patrols than their middle and upper class counterparts who could conduct such rituals in more private contexts such as parlour rooms, theatres and restaurants. The LWPP were extending a form of inter-class control which had been confined to the reformatory sphere in the nineteenth century to the public domain in the early twentieth century.

#### (6:4) The LWPP and the regulation of prostitution and promiscuity

“Who are those women?”

“Oh! They are the women patrols, and they are everywhere!” (ibid: 1918).

From their outset close associations were made between the LWPP and the policing of prostitution and promiscuity. In 1916, CC Caldwell noted how “their quiet and unostentatious work amongst women and girls has been most useful, and has no doubt contributed to the striking reduction in the number of arrests for soliciting prostitution” (LRO H352/2/WAT/1916). Indeed, in their early days the LWPP were keen to point out how “women by their sex are better qualified than men to cope with the problem of immorality and solicitation in the streets” (LRO H364/5/WOM /1919). This gender advantage was intrinsically linked to the fact that as an organisation operating outside the

legislative sphere they did not limit their aims to making arrests and therefore managing prostitution meant being proactive rather than reactive; “It is generally recognised that arrest does very little to combat the evil, but policemen, by reason of their sex, are limited to arrest. They wait until they have sufficient evidence against the offender to arrest her, but they can do little to prevent the commission of the crime” (ibid: 1919). Arguably, with their aptitude to reach out to “women and girls both as criminals and as potential criminals,” they were the natural candidate for regulating the growing spectrum of prostitution cultures and prostitute types at this time (ibid: 1917). Similarly, Jackson has argued how in the national context “women disappeared from the streets in the aftermath of the First World War, partly in response to the visible preventive presence of the women patrols” (Jackson 2006: 174). Liverpool’s official statistics for prostitution certainly correspond with this notion that women were retreating from the streets, although as we have seen hitherto, the validity of decline is highly debatable with the official decline in professional prostitution coinciding with a significant increase in amateur prostitution, whilst such statistics do not necessarily reflect the situation on the street. Furthermore, the role the LWPP played in fashioning this decline is difficult if not impossible to quantify. Indeed, the LWPP’s continued presence after the war and their campaigns for attested policewomen, hinged upon the notion that the problem of women in the streets – as both offender and victim – persisted after the Armistice. The above case-studies testify to the fact that women and girls continued to patronise the city’s public spaces across the interwar period. Of course, given the bigger political aspirations of the LWPP at this moment, a certain degree of interpretative caution should be levelled against how acute the problem of prostitution and promiscuity on Liverpool’s streets really was. As Williams has argued in her study of the public lives of Liverpool’s women between the wars, the campaigns for female integration into the police “reveal much about the aspirations of women for a greater public role in this period” (Williams 2000: 130). It is feasible that in the pursuit to achieve their own feminine aspirations they were willing to exaggerate the problem of public feminine behaviour in Liverpool.

In 1929, the Secretary of the LWPPC wrote to the Home Secretary requesting a more detailed numerical analysis of “the number of police cases of a sexual nature in Liverpool, in any given

year, in which women and children were concerned”, than what was provided in the LCPF annual reports (LRO 365/3/3/WOM/1929). Although, the Home Secretary replied stating that he was unable to provide such material – “this information could only be supplied by the Chief Constable” – it provides an example of just how explicitly central female sexuality was to the LWPPC campaign process. In many ways the politicisation of prostitution by the LWPP was reminiscent of Armstrong’s campaigns in late Victorian Liverpool whereby the ‘prostitution problem’ was utilised as a means to change the municipal landscape of control. On the other hand, as an organisation which for the first time took preventative work to the front lines of prostitution control, it is likely that their presence and interventions did translate into the declining arrest rates for prostitution at this time. Indeed, their interest was in “keeping women and girls out of the Police Courts than in getting them into it” (LRO H364/5/WOM/1919). Where women did end up in court the LWPP would act as escort, character witness and often in the capacity of a court missionary.

Whilst the records do not allow us to determine how many prostitutes actually came into contact with the LWPP, or more importantly to reconstruct the personal experiences of such women that did, as an organisation proficient in ‘observing’ behaviour – as oppose to legislating against it - their records are rich in detailing the geography of prostitution and prostitute customs and cultures. Operating outside of the legislative sphere, the LWPP observations may well be more illustrative and wide-ranging than those that we can glean from the court registers given that the registers invariably only detail interactions with arrested prostitutes. Using the LWPP annual reports it is possible to construct a sense of the spaces they patrolled. “Every evening and some afternoons” the patrols carried out their duties in four areas (ibid: 1919):

Lime Street, London Road, Church Road, Lord Street and Pier Head  
Brownlow Hill and the surrounding district.  
Pitt Street and the surrounding district  
Scotland Road and the surrounding district.

During the school holidays the LWPP extended their patrol ground to include some of the City’s main parks as follows:

Princes and Sefton Parks  
Newsham Park  
Stanley Park

## Wavertree Playground

The areas covered by the patrols and the times duties were carried out, allows us to establish where and when feminine immorality was perceived to be most concentrated, as well as deciphering who exactly the LWPP were anticipating to control. This mixture of park space, dock area, city centre thoroughfares, and residential streets, suggests that at once, the LWPP were seeking to protect the innocent – i.e. children in the parks – yet deter and prevent the deviant – i.e. women frequenting docked ships. In this sense, their subjects required both protection from others and from themselves. The geography of prostitution was given particular importance Potter when she presented her evidence to the SOC, outlining the four districts in which patrols targeted the problem of prostitution:

**District A and B:** “In which are the principal shopping centres, places of amusement and of refreshment.”

**District C:** “The foreign quarter, in which are most of the seamen’s hostels, emigrant’s hostels and many apartment houses.”

**District D:** “In which are most of the common lodging houses, also the poor Irish quarter” (TNA HO 326/8/56/1927-28).

For the purpose of clarity, it is worth pointing out that District A and District B covered Lime Street, London Road, Church Road, Lord Street and Pier Head, Brownlow Hill and the surrounding district. District C denoted their patrol of Pitt Street and the surrounding district, and District D was Scotland Road and the surrounding district. Whilst their work inferably concentrated upon street activity, Potter’s evidence corresponded with Everett’s observation that solicitation was increasingly shifting away from the streets and into “public houses, cafes and restaurants” at this time; “We observe very little open solicitation taking place in the streets” (ibid: 1927-28). Where solicitation was seen to take place on the streets, the patrols noted that it was usually achieved through subtle and coded exchanges such as “a sign, nod or wink”, for a girl “to stand and look into a shop window until a man comes up,” or men to “rattle money in their pockets” (ibid:1927-28). Where solicitation did cause offence to the public it was noted that typically the prostitute had been drinking and therefore her solicitation was “of a more open nature” (ibid: 1927-28). Interestingly, it was mainly women who complained to the patrols having felt offended by what they witnessed, suggesting that judgements based upon the perceived breaching of appropriate femininity were

often cast most strongly by other females. It was noted how “we do not often see resentment shown in other cases” (ibid: 1927-28). It would seem that just as was the case with the CJS, the LWPP worked with a hierarchy of vice in mind which was intrinsically linked to how visible the actions of the prostitute were. And, it would appear that the gulf emerging between the more prosperous off-street prostitute who was able to circumnavigate the law and the street-walker whose continued patronisation of the streets left her susceptible to legislation (as noted in chapter five) was also observed by the LWPP:

“The girl who is deliberately living on her earnings on the streets, if she is doing well, is skilled enough to keep within the law; she generally lives in apartments, has little desire to lead a disciplined life, and is very inaccessible. It is more often the poorer frequenter of lodging houses who gets arrested for solicitation. Our work as Lodging House Inspectors enables us to get into touch with the latter; our presence in the streets acts as a deterrent to the former, whose overtures would be more blatant if we were not present” (ibid:1927-28).

Again, the evidence from the LWPP speaks of the complex dynamics of prostitution in interwar Liverpool whereby an increasing amateur culture was met by a concurrent expansion in the professionalization of prostitution, whilst the archetypal street-walker continued to exist. The LWPP were well positioned to extend their focus across this expanding spectrum of prostitution, and it is clear that their ability to bring preventive methods to the front-lines was producing results; “Superior girl found in company with well-known prostitute. Told patrols had left her widowed mother for a week. Now living in common lodging house. Mother found with difficulty; false address given. Mother went to lodging house next day; girl glad to return. Found better work by patrols” (LRO H364/5/WOM/1917).

Potter’s statement also allows us to construct an invaluable profile of the prostitute in terms of age and earnings, as well as an understanding of how these factors varied between different areas of the city. Indeed, such insights fit neatly with Henderson’s recent call for historians to redirect attention away from the preoccupation with narratives of sexual deviancy and criminality towards offering “much more detailed – and probably far more mundane – reconstructions of the experience of prostitution” by asking questions such as, “how much could prostitutes expect to earn”, and “what was the money spent on”? (Henderson 1997: 232). There is a certain irony that Henderson also argued to leave the regulatory material behind, when evidently such material can actually lead us



closer to the prostitute and her everyday experiences. In Districts A and B, the majority of the women soliciting were known to the LWPP as prostitutes, were mainly young women, and prices charged within these areas varied “from about £5 (including accommodation) to 7/6” (TNA HO 326/8/56/1927-28). In District C – the area popularly known as the Foreign Quarter – the women were generally not “known to the Patrol as convicted prostitutes” (ibid: 1927-28). Here female promiscuity was specifically linked to the City’s port status, with its large number of sailors and emigrants lodging within this area. Potter focussed particularly upon the young age of the women observed on the District’s streets and in its “cafes and chip-shops”(ibid: 1927-28). Girls “from about 17 years” were seen to “pick up men”, whilst girls “from 14 upwards” frequented the Foreign Quarter’s places of entertainment and leisure, although with regards to the latter group the LWPP found it difficult to establish “whether their motive is prostitution or a desire for amusement and companionship” (ibid:1927-28). Drawing attention to the especially young age of the girls in this area suggests - that alike to Deacon - Potter was particularly concerned with the morality of the young because even if they were not yet prostitutes, the LWPP had observed how over time they were frequently “beginning to lead immoral lives” (ibid: 1927-28). Here, the boundaries between the amateur and the professional become blurred in order for the LWPP to warn of how the latter was often the inevitable consequence of the previous. Just as national representations had focussed upon the link between amateur prostitution and the desire for glamour and luxuries, in Liverpool so pronounced were these associations that the LWPP set about rechanneling these feminine desires into more ‘healthy’ contexts. They noted how upon “seeing them on the streets so often,” they “advised them to join a Club, as it seemed a pity for such nice girls to be going from one cafe to another as they are doing” (LRO H364/5/WOM/1928). By 1944, the LWPP were advocating the establishment of “glamour clubs” for the city’s young women: “The best preventive method that could be adopted was the establishment of "glamour clubs" for these girls, where they could find adventure and romance in decent surroundings; where they could meet boys drawn from the same type of surroundings” (*LDD*, 17 May 1944).

In District C rates were “about the same as the lower rates” charged in the city centre districts A and B, given that money “as a rule fairly plentiful amongst the semen and Chinese” (TNA HO

326/8/56/1927-28). The LWPP's observations regarding feminine behaviour in this quarter challenges the notion that there no longer existed a problem with feminine sexual immorality in Chinatown by the mid-1920s as propagated by the absence of arrests in the court register within this area. The LWPP's evidence shows that by the mid-1920s the area was typically frequented by younger women who were not known to be prostitutes, an indication that prostitution had not retreated here but had instead metamorphosed into different forms and 'shades'. This is a perfect reminder of why it is so crucial to look across the spectrum of control and extend the gaze beyond the CJS, and more importantly the value in weaving all these regulatory strands together in order to construct the clearest picture possible. Indeed, whilst Caldwell and Everett were keen to point out that prostitution did not occur on or around the docks, the LWPP were evidently concerned about the potential for prostitution and promiscuity along the city's 12 miles of docks. The special problems presented by Liverpool's status as a global port appears to have been particularly acute in the mid-to-late 1930s, the very moment at which professional prostitution had dissipated completely in the court registers and crime statistics. In 1938, the LWPP set up a new patrol in Garston, the dock area to the very south of the city's parameters. There were growing concerns that "young people from 14 to 18 years" were frequenting the area with "the chief attraction being the foreign sailor who is only too willing to spend money for his evening's entertainment" (LRO H364/5/WOM/1938). In the same year, Argentine seamen stationed in the city centre Canning Dock for six weeks also caused the LWPP "grave concern" (ibid). Again, the exceptionally young age of the girls – "some only 12-14 years of age" – was noted as particularly alarming, as they "flocked to the Dock Road from long distances to get in touch with the sailors (ibid). In response to the temporary docking of the Argentine sailors "beats were altered to meet the emergency": "Children were sent home, and girls and sailors seen accosting warned about their behaviour. Every effort was made to prevent and dissuade girls from visiting and parading the district, but it was difficult to get any response, as in some cases girls actually seen on to the trams for home returned again and again during the evening"(ibid). Again, the LWPP's records allow us to construct a much more nuanced understanding of both geography of prostitution and the evolution of the prostitute than that which the CJS records permit us to do, whilst the value of both are only fully realised when they are examined in conjunction with one another.

Prostitution in District D varied from that in the Foreign Quarter, in the sense that it was linked to poverty as opposed to sexual immorality, with women here “out to get the price of a night’s lodging” (TNA HO 326/8/56/1927-28). The women observed soliciting were “of the older type”, and prices charged were the lowest in the City, “ranging from about 4d. upwards” (ibid: 1927-28). It is interesting to note that Potter’s description of this area was brief and void of any concerns for the women working here, which leads us back to the concept that the older prostitute was commonly viewed as past saving in comparison to the young woman starting out. Sexual immorality was not simply measured in accordance to actions or motivations but was often based upon the age of the woman; the young girl frequenting places of entertainment with a man for luxuries or simply company could be perceived as more alarming than the old woman obviously engaging with prostitution in order to earn a living. This certainly ties in with national representations whereby concerns regarding the greed of young prostitutes frequently superseded any anxieties connected to the older prostitute.

Unfortunately, neither the LWPP’s records nor the court registers allow us to quantify how many prostitution cases they dealt with year on year, yet it is evident that not only was prostitution control central to their endeavours and existence but they were central to the control of prostitution in interwar Liverpool; after all they were one of the very few organisations representing the city in front of the SOC. Levine has argued that “the new [women] police and patrols developed a separate identity and voice [from older feminist and/or feminine organisations] that pulled them increasingly toward a masculine-identified authority” in the early twentieth century (Levine 1994: 75). Whilst this was certainly traceable in the daily beat work of the patrols, their new voice and identity was continually mediated by the fact that the ‘masculine-identified authority’ – the LCPF – was resolute that their value was contingent upon their independence as a female organisation. As regulators, the LWPP frequently encountered the same gender barriers as the women they regulated. It was not until 1947 that women were eventually inaugurated into the LCPF, some 33 years after their establishment. For Liverpool’s interwar prostitutes this meant that they experienced a distinct and

comprehensive spectrum of control; for the scholar of interwar prostitution it provides an unparalleled insight into both the culture and control of prostitution beyond the legislative sphere.

**(6:5) The Liverpool Branch of the Jewish Association for the Protection of Girls and Women (LJAPGW): A Case of Protecting Jewish Women or Preserving Jewish Reputation?**

The origins of the JAPGW go back to the early summer of 1885, the same summer incidentally in which W.T. Stead's series of exposés appeared in the *Pall Mall Gazette* under the title of 'The Maiden Tribute of Modern Babylon'. Although, as the historical literature chronicling the British Jewry's responses to prostitution in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century's illustrate, tackling the problem of 'white slavery' and specifically the sexual trafficking of Jewish women remained a key anticipation of the JAPGW throughout their history – indeed they played a pivotal role in campaigns for legislative change on both the national and international stage – as Knepper has observed, it was but merely a coincidence that they emerged at the same time Stead's articles had mobilised political lobbying from a host of organisations culminating in the CLA of 1885 (see Kaplan 1982; Bristow 1982; Marks 1992; Knepper 2007). Instead, the story goes that a chance meeting with two Jewish prostitutes in London's East End by a minster's wife, Mrs Herbert, had shed light on the lacuna in provisions for rescuing and reforming fallen Jewish girls (Knepper 2007: 240). The two women expressed their reluctance to enter Christian homes for fear that they would have to concede their faith, as well as highlighting the precarious position they were left in ostracised from their Jewish community owing to their profession and with no way of turning around their lives. After Herbert relayed her concerns to Lady Battersea – née Constance de Rothschild – who in turn informed her cousin Claude Montefiore and the rabbi Simeon Singer, the Jewish Ladies Society for Prevention and Rescue Work came into being in April 1885 (ibid: 240-41). From the outset, the JAPGW (the name change came about in 1897) constructed itself as both a preventative and rescue organisation. (ibid: 240-41). Prevention was to take the form of aiding Jewish girls arriving from the Pale of Settlement at London's ports. Rescue work was to be carried out at Charcroft House in London's Mile End, a facility purchased in 1886 to help "those who have sinned and been sinned against" and to act as a place of refuge "where the stricken, the maimed, and the weary may rest and take heart again before recommencing the battle of life" (quoted in Marks 1992: 124). Their involvement in the anti-trafficking movement was a logical avenue of

work given their alliances with Jewish organisations across the world, and one which secured them international recognition (particularly from the 1910s), although the politics of ‘white slavery’ remained separate, and did not detract, from their ‘grassroots’ mission of aiding London’s ‘fallen’ Jewish women everyday/ London’s streets.

It was some years after the formation of the London-based JAPGW that the Liverpool branch was launched by Mr. Montefiore in 1911. Since the late eighteenth century, Jewish refugees fleeing persecution in mainland Europe had been arriving in Liverpool, although it was following the Russian massacres of 1882 that they began settling – and passing through on their way to the Americas – in large numbers. By the interwar period the largest cohort of ‘foreign’ immigrants living in the city were those who had arrived from Eastern Europe, and in particular Russia and Poland. Although, of course, not all of those arriving from the East would have been Jewish, and indeed by the interwar period many immigrants had been naturalised and thus were no longer strictly speaking ‘foreigners’ (at the time of the 1921 census of 9,459 ‘foreigners’ in Liverpool some 2,052 of these had become British subjects – see chapter eight), nevertheless the Jewish in Liverpool were a large and established settler community.

During their early days, and into the war, the organisation focussed its resources on the “meeting of ships” and dealing with “emigration traffic” particularly as there were “many young girls travelling alone” (LRO 296/PGW/1/1920). They also dealt with obtaining passports for Jewish females and liaised with associates in ports across the world to ensure the safe meeting of girls “on the other side” (ibid). Away from the docks workers visited emigration boarding houses and the Police Courts on a daily basis looking for any Jewish cases, with the purpose of offering “the necessary help where possible” (ibid). Unlike the LWPP, the LJAPGW actively sought out cases. Towards the end of the war the organisation’s attention began to diversify. No longer was its work solely connected to Liverpool’s status as a port city and the ‘special’ difficulties this created with regards to passenger traffic, but its focus branched out to include those Jewish women and girls for whom Liverpool was their permanent home.

In part, this was an inevitable transition as concerns over ‘white slavery’ began to subside after the 1912 CLA Act, and passenger trade passing through the city continued to decline throughout the interwar period (see chapter eight). Additionally, just as the war had prompted similar organisations within Liverpool to reconsider their methods and spaces of control as concerns centred upon moral laxity in the streets, and in particular feminine public behaviour, the LJAPGW’s focus altered accordingly. Initially, this took the form of visiting the city’s schools from 1917, and liaising with headmistresses in order to encourage girls to join the Jewish Girls Club upon leaving school. Just as other agencies had noted the positive role girls and boys clubs played in the continuation of discipline, guidance and supervision after the point of schooling, and its benefits in keeping the young off the streets and away from trouble, the LJAPGW recognised that intervening in the course of young Jewish girls lives was a potentially powerful tool in protecting the future of the individual and the reputation of the broader Jewish community. Miss Miriam Kresner, a member of the LJAPGW and headmistress of the girls section of the Liverpool Hebrew School at Hope Place, agreed that it “would be a good idea” to observe the older school girls in order to “see what way they are shaping” and to ultimately “try to direct them as to their future career” (LRO 296/PGW/1/1917). However, it was in November 1918 that this shift was truly consolidated with the appointment of Miss Sarah Ettinger as worker to the society. On Ettinger’s recommendation the Gentleman’s Committee facilitated the establishment of patrols, with the anticipation that monitoring the behaviour of Jewish women in the streets would grant them a closer proximity to the daily activities of girls and women. However, it is important to note that the organisation did not abandon its duties of escorting women travelling through the city completely. Indeed, a list of figureheads Ettinger introduced herself to on her appointment confirmed the LJAPGW’s dual approach it had adopted by the interwar period focussing on both the transient and the resident female populations:

“Miss Ettinger has introduced herself to; the Head Constable; Mr Cooper, Superintendent Aliens Office; Miss Cowlin, Women Police Patrols; American Consulate, Police Court Missionaries, Miss Andrew, Mental Defect Society; Manager of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board; all Station Masters” (ibid: 1918).

In many ways the LJAPGW was fairly typical of the agencies involved in the unofficial regulation of prostitution in early twentieth century Liverpool. For example, like the LWPP the LJAPGW constructed itself as a regulatory, advisory and welfare agency. The scope of its work, therefore, also dealt with instances where the woman was positioned as victim as well as offender, and regulating prostitutes was by no means its only purpose. Indeed, many of the cases they dealt with had come to their attention following referrals from the LWPP, illustrating a high degree of inter-agency alliance and professionalism between the ‘unofficial’ regulators. Additionally, it operated as an advice bureau for Jewish women seeking practical and financial aid, whether it be in the form of finding employment opportunities, assisting, funding and offering legal representation in separation and divorce cases, providing marriage counselling, covering hospital costs and facilitating emigration requests. One of the more interesting cases dealt with, for example, was that of Gertrude Bellman, a 26 year old who had “been taking drugs for slimming” (LRO 296/PGW/2/1935). The LJAPGW referred her to one of their associated doctors. The capabilities of the LJAPGW set it apart from similar organisations whom were typically constrained by smaller budgets and existed more as a point of referral than a comprehensive service provider in themselves. Invariably, this was connected to the LJAPGW’s disposition as a religious-based philanthropic organisation. Firstly, this meant that it was an internationally recognised and well-connected agency which benefited from generous monetary donations from the global Jewish community, and access to a broad range of affiliated Jewish services, such as Charcroft House in London. Up until the early 1930s - when the precarious position of Jews in Europe hindered the receipt of financial donations – the LJAPGW was in a relatively enviable position both financially and in the sense that it was able to make use of the local network of agencies and provisions as well as those in the wider Jewish community. Secondly, and perhaps most importantly, the LJAPGW stood out for emerging as a religious centred agency at the very time the broader ‘unofficial’ regulatory sphere had undergone a process of secularisation. As the shift away from reform took hold these new preventative organisations emerged along non-sectarian lines (such as the LWPP and the LVA), marking a departure from their nineteenth century predecessors who were typically affiliated to religious orders (interestingly the Penitentiary was the only reformatory in Liverpool

whose admissions policy did not require the woman to have a particular religious denomination). This, as we shall see, had implications upon both the methods and aims of control.

#### **(6:6) The LJAPGW and regulating femininity**

Set against the backdrop of imperial decline, domestic economic downturn and recurring debates regarding the parameters of 'Britishness' following the war, the interwar period was highly conducive to popular conceptualisations which made links between foreignness and prostitution (see Slater 2007). In Liverpool, by this time, the majority of young Jewish women were British-born, whilst in the broader context 'foreignness' increasingly came to refer to racial 'otherness' as oppose to distinctions made along religious lines or national heritage (see chapter eight). Indeed, as previously noted, in interwar Liverpool discourses of 'otherness' centred upon anxieties over a perceived influx of black, Arab and Chinese sailors settling in the city, and more precisely the 'problems' of miscegenation and mixed-raced children. Yet, the notion that prostitution was overrepresented by women from certain national and/or ethnic groups was also in circulation at this time. Importantly, Jewish women were not identified as a cohort especially susceptible to embarking upon a career in prostitution, and earlier associations between Jewish men and procurement and/or trafficking had largely abated by the interwar period. In deciding to turn its attention towards the inappropriate public behaviour of Jewish females – and thus now positioning Jewish women as offenders as well as victims – the LJAPGW were entering a potentially precarious terrain which required careful navigation. Indeed, this was nothing new, for as the wider historiography exhibits, the national organisation based in London had consistently grappled with similar dilemmas since its inauguration. On one level the problem was, as Marks has pointed out, fairly straightforward; Jewish feminine immorality was seen to undermine the community's newfound respectability it had acquired with the granting of full civil rights in 1859 (Marks 1992: 114). However, as Knepper's research on the JAPGW's anti-trafficking campaigns has shown, in dealing with the 'problem' the organisation were often responsible for creating additional problems, namely in the case of white slavery contributing to what Knepper has called the 'racialisation of crime' whereby their work inadvertently served to validate rather than challenge panics surrounding Jewish men's involvement in trafficking (Knepper 2007: 67). By the interwar



period as the LJAPGW turned their gaze towards women behaving inappropriately through their own 'volition' – rather than as victims of 'predatory' males – there was always the risk that in seeking out such cases they would construct a Jewish 'problem', engender racial stereotypes, and destabilize the reputation of the Jewish in Liverpool. Thus, the work of the LJAPGW departed from that of the LCPF and the LWPP in the sense that it was not just about cleaning up the facade of the city or regulating femininity, but it was guided by an overarching aim of preserving the reputation and legitimising the position of Liverpool's Jewish community. Although, as we shall see, it was through embracing and emulating the gender ideals and methods of the wider regulatory landscape and in confronting problems of Jewish feminine immorality that the organisation was able to carve out a legitimate space for themselves and their community within the boundaries of British citizenship rather than outside it. The irony was, therefore, by Jewish women behaving badly the LJAPGW were provided with a convenient means through which to prove rather than jeopardise Jewish respectability, to exhibit their shared British values with their regulatory counterparts and beyond. As Kaplan and Knepper have both argued, "in taking up the cause of their fallen sisters, Jewish women redefined their place in Jewish communities and reshaped modern Jewish identities" (ibid: 67; Kaplan 1979). However, in achieving this end, the individuals dealt with by the LJAPGW were arguably more likely to incur closer and longer supervision and/or harsher repercussions than their non-Jewish counterparts, for not only were they identified as transgressing the parameters of respectable femininity but also as operating outside the parameters of respectable Judaism. If the LWPP patrolled with the hope that their presence would act as a sufficient deterrent, then the LJAPGW patrolled with the intention of identifying problem cases, removing the problem from the individual or failing this removing the individual. The pursuit of making feminine deviance invisible may have been in line with the LCPF's and LWPP'S policies, but as we shall see it functioned at a far more extreme level with the LJAPGW.

Between 1924 and 1936 there were just nine women noted in the case books of the LJAPGW as having some degree of involvement in prostitution. Although it is likely that this represents a conservative approximation of the number of Jewish prostitutes in Liverpool, it is fair to assume that Jewish women were not disproportionately involved in prostitution. Indeed, the records of the

LJAPGW indicate that as an organisation they more commonly dealt with ‘problem cases’ whereby girls were deemed to be exhibiting promiscuous behaviours rather than engaging in prostitution. Yet, just as other contemporaries had made connections between moments of youthful promiscuity and an eventual descent into prostitution (as noted in chapter four) so too did the LJAPGW, and in a climate where shifting conceptualisations meant that promiscuity was increasingly talked about in the same breath as prostitution via the figure of the amateur such cases have a bearing upon any historical inquiry into prostitution. The real significance of the Jewish cases lay not in their statistical significance but rather in how exactly they were handled.

Patrolling was carried out on Wednesdays and the Jewish Sabbath of Saturday, and although this was deemed to be a “quite satisfactory” avenue of work, the LJAPGW’s administrative records indicate that more typically ‘problem cases’ came to their attention following referrals from other regulatory bodies and members of the Jewish community (LRO 296/PGW/1/1918). Of course, this is not to suggest that preventative methods were of little success. In fact, it is likely that the presence of the patrols played a prominent role in both deterring young women and girls from inappropriate public behaviour and guiding them in the ‘right’ direction by way of girls clubs and employment advice. Unfortunately, quantifying how successful patrolling was with any degree of confidence is invariably difficult given that the minutes fail to elaborate on this line of work and success stories were muted by their focus upon problem cases. Reading between the lines, however, it is possible to deduce from the case studies of individuals as to whether the intervention of the LJAGW after the point of transgression had a positive bearing in terms of curtailing problematic behaviour; i.e. did those under the supervision of the LJAPGW go on to reoffend or behave inappropriately or did their misdemeanours become isolated incidences? As mentioned above, and the following cases highlight, the term prevention and/or preventative used to describe such organisations work with women was somewhat misleading, because they operated on a host of different levels as supervisors, court representatives/missionaries, informal probation officers and reformers. Ultimately, prevention signalled the dual desire to prevent immorality and criminality in the first place and also to prevent further transgressions of those already classified as immoral and criminal thereafter by adopting these multiple roles and methods.

The majority of cases suggest that the LJAPGW was successful in achieving their preventative aims, with very few instances of reoffending or persistent cause for concern. The case of Dora Rotenburg, for example, was fairly typical in terms of both the nature of cases dealt with and their outcomes. Dora had moved from London to Liverpool in the August of 1931, and following her father's concerns that she was "staying out late at night" he contacted the LWPP to inform them of this matter (LRO 296/PGW/4/1931). The LWPP on noting that Dora was of Jewish faith referred the case to the LJAPGW. Over the course of the next few months Dora was in regular contact with the organisation, often making visits to them of her own accord. By the December of 1931 the LJAPGW had managed to find her work in Mazy's on Lime Street, and her parents were "very grateful for the interest taken in her" (ibid: 1931). Presumably, the intervention made by the LJAPGW had its desired effect for no further mention was made of Dora in the records, and given that the organisation was particularly astute at updating the profiles they had on girls it is fair to assume that she went on to live a life free from trouble. Miss Ettinger often accompanied girls to court and provided character statements and representation where necessary. The presence of Ettinger evidently had an impact upon the sort of punishments levelled against Jewish women by the magistrates, as where she – or occasionally a colleague appeared in court – imprisonment and fines were always subverted in favour of probation and/or cautions. For example, in December 1934, Gertrude Weinstein was arrested in Grove Street for "behaving in an offensive manner." During her hearing the magistrate asked Miss Ettinger to "take charge of her" and subsequently went on to discharge her (LRO 296/PGW/2/1935). Weinstein was escorted home by Ettinger and never appeared in the LJAPGW records again. Interestingly, other women arrested for the same offence in 1934 were typically issued with a punishment of 40/ or 1 months hard labour, and as discussed in chapter three, women were receiving increasingly severe punishments for public offence disorders by the early to mid 1930s, suggesting that the LJAPGW was recognised by the CJS as a respectable and favourable organisation, and one which could be trusted to provide extended aftercare and supervision in such cases. Even where Jewish women appeared in court under charges of solicitation as common prostitutes, they appeared to be less likely to incur penal incarceration or fines than their non-Jewish counterparts. In June 1926, Rachel Watterson a 27 year

old 'common prostitute' was arrested for soliciting in Clayton Square, and was also charged for being drunk upon arrest. Despite Rachel pleading guilty to both charges, and the fact that as illustrated in chapter three for this particular year the most common outcomes for offences of solicitation and drunkenness were prison and fines, she was discharged under the Probation of the Offenders Act for both charges. For the CJS, the presence of the LJAPGW in court and the aftercare provisions they offered no doubt provided a viable alternative to prison and fines. For women such as Rachel, such representation in court was no doubt welcomed if it meant avoiding imprisonment and fines. And, for the LJAPGW, their involvement in court cases no doubt frequently enabled them to remove girls from the CJS as quickly as possible with minimal damage, freeing them to deal with problems in their own manner and means.

However, for other women the LJAPGW symbolised an intrusion into their lives which had little positive bearing, often leading to far harsher consequences than any which could be dispensed within the CJS. Nowhere was this more vividly captured than in their transportation programme which sought to remove feminine vice by literally moving 'problem' girls and families away from Liverpool. For example, in 1919 the 'Falk Sisters' – as they were referred to by the LJAPGW – were sent to America after passports and passage were secured by the organisation. For several years the behaviour of Doris and Fanny had perturbed the LJAPGW. Doris had been arrested for solicitation on numerous occasions whilst Fanny had had an illegitimate child with an American sailor and had served a stint at Charcroft House. The 'Falk Sisters' were certainly not the only individuals to have been transported to America when all the conventional routes of control had been exhausted with little effect by the LJAPGW; removing the problem few was probably deemed as acceptable in the pursuit to preserve the reputation of the Jewish community on the whole. Evidently, transportation as a method for dealing with the criminal and immoral had not fully dissipated by the interwar period. This distinctly twentieth century organisation was utilising regulatory tactics firmly rooted in the nineteenth century.

If for families like the Falk's it was difficult to subvert the interventions of the LJAPGW, then for others the organisation's interest in their conduct was often not only resisted but also a source

of amusement to be made light of. For example, in November 1937 a 26 year old Jewish woman named Doris Cohen was arrested at 10.50 p.m. on a Saturday for ‘behaving in an offensive manner’. She was observed by Constable Howe at the corner of Upper Parliament Street and Grove Street, Toxteth, to have stopped “three men who resented her behaviour” before crossing the road to speak “to a man in a motorcar (whom she did not know)” (LRO 296/PGW/4/1937). It was at the point in which Doris was getting into the car that Howe and his colleague made the arrest, having admitted that she did not know the man. When the case came up in court a couple of days later she was found guilty of “very bad behaviour” although she was dismissed with a caution “as this was her first offence” (ibid). Whilst Doris’ case was not an outright solicitation offence, the inference was certainly there. Some weeks later Miss Ettinger followed up the case by visiting Doris at her home which she shared with her two sisters in the middle-class South Liverpool suburb of Mossley Hill, which by this time, alongside bordering Allerton, housed many of the city’s Jewish citizens. In her case-notes Ettinger recorded how “her sisters seemed to make light of this incident, and said it is done very frequently; in fact the eldest sister said she very often had a lift herself and saw no wrong in doing so” (ibid). It is difficult to determine whether Doris’ case spoke of an increasing tendency for women to innocently ‘catch lifts home’ with motorists or in fact further evidence that solicitation was moving up Toxteth at this moment and was becoming increasingly associated to the use of the private motorcar. What is clear, however, is that the LJAPGW’s efforts to monitor the public behaviour of Jewish girls was not always taken seriously by those who they monitored.

#### (6:7) The cases of Fanny Kessler and Gertrude Greenburg

Rarely is it possible for historians to gain access to, or piece together, an in-depth and complete profile of both the offending histories of women within the CJS and their subsequent and/or previous interactions with a particular regulatory body. The records of the LJAPGW are extremely valuable given that their proficient administrative records and their long-term monitoring of individuals has resulted in the survival of a number of extended personal histories which enable us to get to grips with the evolution of feminine sexual deviancy at the micro level and the regulatory mechanisms they subsequently experienced. The cases of Fanny Kessler and Gertrude Greenburg are two of such cases.

Indeed, we have already come across Fanny Kessler in chapter five, the Jewish woman who was arrested in early 1934 for the offence of solicitation and the offence of being drunk and disorderly in Lime Street, although crucially the official court registers only made reference to the latter charge. Kessler's first interaction with the LJAPGW came almost a decade earlier when in January 1925 at the age of 29 she was arrested for 'indecent behaviour', an offence for which she was discharged under the POA. Following her dismissal, Kessler was presently visited by Miss Gordon, a representative of the Lancashire Mental Asylums Board, but the visit was cut short when Fanny's mother made it clear that she "will not allow her daughter to be taken away" (LRO 296/PGW/4/1936). No further reference was made to Fanny in the case books until her arrest in February 1934, although she and her family were evidently well known to Mrs. Ettinger who stated when representing her in court that "she had known Fanny many years and her family were highly respectable and hardworking" (ibid). Indeed, information gathered from both the census and the British Phone Book allows us to establish that Fanny's father - who had settled in Liverpool at some point in the early 1890s from Russia - had carved out a successful family tailoring business which operated for over 50 years. Indeed, passenger records show that Fanny's father regularly made trips to New York in the early twentieth century, perhaps for business purposes or to visit family, but in any which case an indication that her family were relatively financially comfortable. Fanny was dismissed with a caution in this instance, and "warned that if she came there again she would be severely dealt with" (ibid). This was far from the end of either her experiences with the CJS or the LJAPGW. In May 1935 her mother died, and Fanny subsequently went to live with her married sister in Ilford. She returned to Liverpool towards the end of 1935, but within a week she had "returned to London" (ibid). In late September 1935, Fanny had been charged with soliciting in London and was subsequently placed under the supervision of a JAPGW probationer based in Great Prescott Street for a period of one year. Approximately ten months or so following her arrest for soliciting in London, Fanny gave birth to a child in Bethnal Green Hospital, East London. Whether the pregnancy had arisen from her involvement in prostitution is unclear, but the LJAPGW records show a high level of disdain towards this "illegitimate birth", writing how "fortunately the child died" (ibid). The following month Fanny was returned to Liverpool to live

with her brother. Less than a month later she was admitted to the Smithdown Road Hospital “for observation”, because it was noted that “since her return Fanny has been very troublesome...” (ibid). By early 1937 she was back at home with her brother, but he had expressed concern to the LJAPGW stating that “she stays in bed the whole day, in fact she has not been up for the last four or five days” (ibid: 1937). This was the last entry recorded for Fanny in the records of the LJAPGW, although given that the organisation was dissolved in 1942 following crippling financial problems experienced since the late 1930s and that my analysis of the court registers ends at 1938, this does not necessarily mean that she ceased offending at this point. Fanny’s story is important for a number of reasons, not least because it allows us to chart the trajectory of offending within and beyond the CJS over a sustained period and plot this evolution within the broader life course of an individual. It illustrates the complex transactions of power between the CJS, the LJAPGW, the medical sphere and Fanny’s family. Perhaps most importantly, it acts as a stark reminder that just because the LJAPGW did not possess legislative power they were by no means powerless; frequently women experienced far harsher retribution from the unofficial regulators than they did from the CJS.

Gertrude Greenberg, a young Jewish girl who lived in Anson Street just off London Road, first came to the LJAPGW’s attention at the age of 20. Her mother had contacted the organisation in November 1934 complaining “that her daughter is beyond control” and stating how she did “not like her companions Sarah Fabian and Dinah Fagil” (LRO 296/PGW/2/1934). Indeed, Sarah’s mother also approached the LJAPGW at this time following her concerns that she was “very wild” and that she “stays out late at night” (ibid). Miss Ettinger recalled in the initial case notes for Sarah how she herself had “had to plead on more than one occasion for Mr. Fabian to take his daughter home” (ibid). In December 1934, the organisation made follow-up visits to the homes of Fabian and Greenberg, at which point it was established that whilst Greenberg was “improving” much to delight of her mother, Fabian’s father “still complained of this girls behaviour”, and the LJAGW recorded in their notes how “this family has caused endless trouble” (ibid). By the October of 1935, Greenberg’s situation had deteriorated, with her mother once again complaining that “Gertrude returns home late at night” (ibid: 1935). Although Fabian’s behaviour continued to trouble the

LJAPGW – a final entry was recorded in September 1936 following her referral to the organisation this time by the LWPP – it was Gertrude’s personal plight which dominated both their resources and their records in the ensuing years. In February 1936 Gertrude left Liverpool with the intention of staying for a couple of weeks with a married friend of hers in Manchester who had requested she pay her a visit. Gertrude’s parents had consented to this trip, however, when almost a month following her departure from Liverpool Gertrude had failed to return home nor make contact with them, they became “alarmed” and went to Manchester bringing her back with them (LRO 296/PGW/4/1936). It transpired that towards the end of her intended two-week stay, her friend, a Mrs. Davidson, had “complained to Gertrude that she was in difficulties and could not pay her bills,” suggesting that Gertrude “should earn some money for her improperly” (ibid). Mrs. Davidson had regularly taken Gertrude “out into town”, to the cafes of Market Street “where they met boys and Gertrude took them home” (ibid). This arrangement involved Mr. Davidson who stayed at home to mind their baby “while Mrs. Davidson and Gertrude did the business” (ibid). Gertrude “understood” that if she returned home without a boy Mr. Davidson would be “very vexed with her” (ibid). Following her return to Liverpool, Mrs. Greenberg found out that Gertrude “was in trouble,” and contacted the organisation as she felt that she could not keep her daughter at home (ibid). In May 1936 Gertrude was admitted to Charcroft House, London. In spite of the home’s admissions policy which stated that women who were part-time prostitutes should not be considered, Gertrude was given a place on the condition that she had a blood test to prove that she was free from venereal disease. As Larks has noted, Charcroft House also “rejected those women who sought the home merely as a shelter for a few weeks before and after their confinements and showed no ‘intention of ultimate reform’” (Marks 1992: 125). Perhaps unsurprisingly then, Gertrude resided in the home for just over a year, entering six months prior to giving birth and remaining for a further six months after. In December 1936, Gertrude gave birth to a boy. Her mother was informed of the birth via the LJAPGW, and although she sent some money down to London for Gertrude and was “very anxious about her,” remained defiant that Gertrude could not return to Liverpool with the baby (LRO 296/PGW/4/1937). In fact, the LJAPGW noted how her mother was not only defiant but also in denial, insisting that Gertrude writes home “saying that she is in a big shop and is doing well” (ibid). The rectitude of Mrs. Greenberg was bolstered by one of



the home's founding desires to offer a place of refuge "to those who are anxious to hide their shame" (ibid).

Although the casebooks do not record the fate of her baby, it is likely that this common desire to preserve personal and communal reputation resulted in the baby being adopted and given a new name as no further entries can be traced after that of his birth in the BMD index or broader digital records. By February of 1937 it appeared that Gertrude was well on her way to achieving the home's coveted anticipation of "ultimate reform," admitting that she was "responsible for her downfall" (ibid). Whilst the LJAPGW continued to liaise with their colleagues in Manchester to "ascertain whether the story told by Gertrude was correct," enquiries were soon halted given the reluctance of the Davidsons to cooperate (ibid). It is possible, of course, that Gertrude's 'admission' of responsibility represented a tactic of compliance she assumed in order to pass through their programme of reform as quickly as possible. The last entry recorded in relation to this case was in June 1937, when it was noted that Gertrude was still residing at Charcroft House but was looking for suitable employment. Whilst the LJAPGW records fail to chronicle Gertrude's journey beyond the home, by consulting the BMD index we can piece together her broader life-story. Crucially, Gertrude never returned home to Liverpool. She settled in London, and was married in Stepney in 1949. She went on to have two further children, and died at the age of 84 on the South Coast. It would appear that her involvement in prostitution did not impinge upon her long-term experiences although whether this was in spite of or because of her time at Charcroft House and the interventions of the LJAPGW can never be known. What Gertrude's story does reveal is how in some cases, just as commentators had insisted, fairly trivial but worrying behaviour such as staying out late did descend into prostitution. Again, the length of time Gertrude spent at Charcroft House shows that the interventions of non-legislative bodies could wield more of an impact over women's lives than those dispensed by the CJS, whilst her referral to the home indicates that Victorian models of reform still held currency in the early twentieth century. Indeed, the case of Gertrude highlights how the LJAPGW incorporated and exuded a unique blend of twentieth century methods of patrolling and attempts at prevention with nineteenth century reactionary methods of reform, which as we have seen was also detectable in the work of the LWPP.

As the twentieth century witnessed the movement of the unofficial regulators into the front-line of control, Liverpool's interwar prostitutes were subjected to a comprehensive regulatory network which now almost exclusively focussed upon prevention. Indeed, this movement neatly accorded with the shift in focus at this time towards the regulation of amateur prostitution, and proved invaluable to the CJS's overarching objective to free the streets from sexual immorality. Evidently, working outside the parameters of the law and void of legislative powers did not mean that these organisations were powerless. Indeed, the regulatory methods imposed upon prostitutes from the unofficial regulators were frequently more severe than those implemented by the CJS.

## **Section Four: Prostitute Experiences**

### **(7:0) Introduction**

Ironically, it was only with her untimely death in late 1919 that Elizabeth McDermott gained a public identity and a historical voice. That is to say the court case into her murder and the subsequent newspaper coverage of it provide/d both the interwar audience and subsequent historians a unique portal into a world of prostitution which has proven notoriously difficult to gain access to. Witness statements and court proceedings provided information not only of McDermott's death but also a profile of her life, where she was born and where she had lived, who she associated with, the streets she typically plied her trade in, and her previous encounters with the police. We know, for example, that she used the aliases Isabella and Bella Wilson and that she was born in Greenock, Scotland in approximately 1865. We know that at the time of her murder she was living in a lodging house in Richmond Row and had done so for the past four years. We know from evidence presented in court by Mary Ann Maguire - a resident of the lodging house - that McDermott had told her "she had been married twice and that her real name was Docherty," and that when she had last seen her around 8.45 p.m. on Christmas Eve "she was sober" (*LDPM*, 30 December 1919). Police evidence revealed that McDermott "had been convicted before the magistrates on many occasions," and that she typically "frequented Chapel Street and Water Street," the latter of which was only approximately 25 yards away from where her body was found (*ibid*). Even those who worked in close proximity with prostitutes, be it as police constables, magistrates, rescue workers, or police court missionaries would have seldom been privy to such wide-ranging details of the personal and professional life of a prostitute. Whilst the methodological approach adopted in this section – and explained in chapter two– seeks to gain a similar level of insight into the personal and offending histories of interwar prostitutes, it does not necessarily rely upon exceptional moments and high-profile cases in order to bring individual experiences to light. Instead, it takes the stance that all the information surrounding prostitutes offending and personal lives is 'out there' it is just that rarely is it already collated and presented in such a convenient way to historians as it is through exceptional cases such as the McDermott murder. Indeed, using the 'whole life analysis' approach enables us to glean an even deeper insight into McDermott's personal and offending life beyond what has been conveniently collated and stored in the historical

pages of the print-press. For example, using the census records we can ascertain that at the time of the 1901 census Elizabeth was a prisoner in Walton Prison, Liverpool. She was aged 32 and her place of birth was recorded as Scotland. She was listed as single and had no occupation recorded against her name. By the 1911 census, Elizabeth could not be located, a common methodological difficulty involved in tracing prostitute women and discussed previously in chapter two. This is what is meant by the process of constructing histories rather than just recovering them, and by illuminating the ‘historical voice’ or ‘voices’ of Liverpool’s interwar prostitutes rather than the literal.

### **(7:1) Age of women prosecuted**

Hitherto, no study has been able to offer such a profile on the ages of prostitutes within a particular locality for the whole period, and no research has provided any information regarding the ages of amateurs (or ‘unknown women’ as they were legislatively referred to). Using the petty session court registers the following information is based upon the age recorded for every offence committed by professional and amateur street prostitutes for the years 1918, 1922, 1926, 1930, 1934 and 1938; equating to over 3,000 entries.<sup>1</sup> The first part of this section focuses upon the professional street prostitute, whilst the second section moves on to consider the ‘unknown woman’ charged for soliciting, more commonly known as the amateur. Finally, these findings are then contextualised in chapter eight against the broader economic climate, and specifically in relation to how age acted as determinant in fashioning women’s experiences of employment and unemployment in interwar Liverpool.

### **(7:2) Age of professional prostitutes**

The average age of a professional prostitute proceeded against for street prostitution offences in interwar Liverpool was 33.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately, the existence of comparable data from other historical enquiries is fairly limited at present, although what evidence does exist infers that the average age of street prostitutes in Liverpool was relatively high. Whilst there is nothing to compare with other British towns and cities during this period - perhaps hardly surprising given that interwar research

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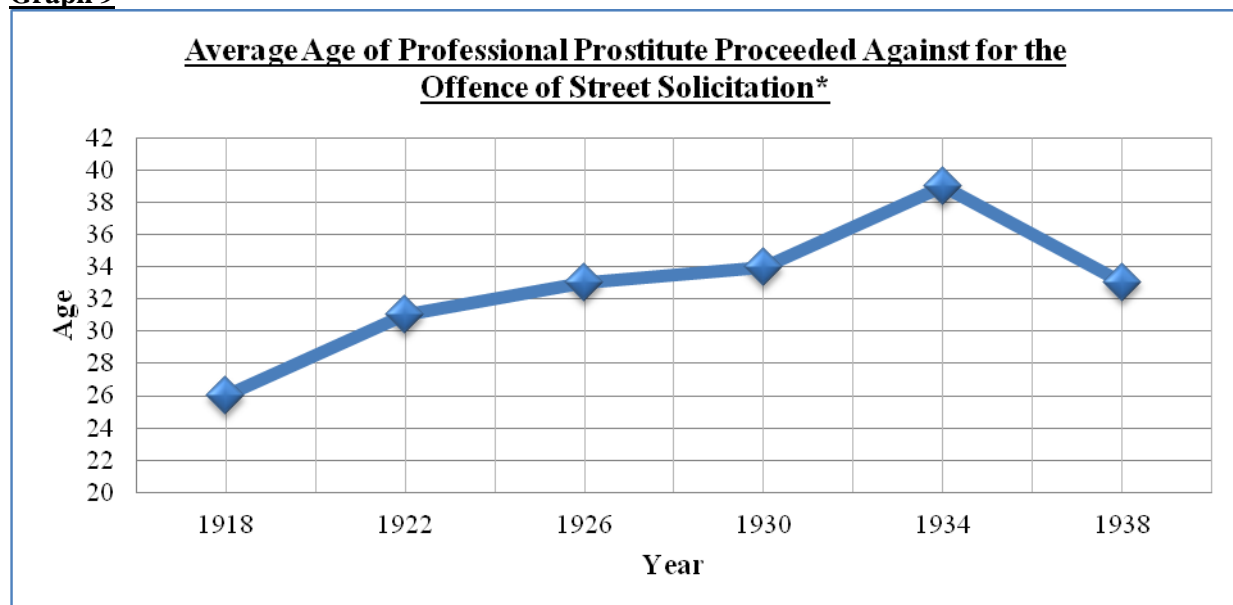
<sup>1</sup> Note that the year 1918 is not sampled in relation to unknown women or amateurs soliciting as such cases were only legislatively dealt with following the enactment of the LCA in 1921.

<sup>2</sup> This figure is based upon the sampled years of 1918, 1922, 1926, 1930, 1934 and 1938.

is still very much in its infancy - Luddy's study of prostitution in the Irish Free State does provide an interesting point of comparison. For the year 1929, Luddy tabulates the personal and offending information of those prostitutes committed to Dublin's Mountjoy Prison (58 women in total) (Luddy 2007: 220-25). Although Luddy does not make use of the data herself for the purpose of calculating average age (she does however note that the majority of women were "aged between 18 and 40"), it is possible to gauge that this was 32 (ibid: 219). Given that those prostitutes typically referred to prison were older and recidivist offenders who were seen to be unreceptive to or undeserving of alternative methods of punishment, it is probable that this figure was higher than the average age of Dublin's broader prostitute population. Turning the gaze back to Liverpool and to an earlier period we can use the data provided in the 1911 census to identify the ages of women housed in the city's reformatories which dealt exclusively with prostitutes (so as to avoid including women who were not in institutions because of their involvement in prostitution). So, for example, the LFP had 39 prostitutes in their Falkner Street home in 1911, with a collective average age of 25. Similarly, the Magdalen Institution at Mount Vernon Green housed 34 prostitutes, with an average age of 20. Again, a degree of interpretative caution should be levelled, given that such institutions typically catered for younger prostitutes who were understood to be more receptive to and deserving of reform programmes than their older counterparts. In fact, the Magdalen Institution clearly stated in its admissions policy that along with Roman Catholics "no elderly women shall be admitted, and as a rule only unmarried under thirty years of age will be admitted" (LRO H362/8/MAG1906). At the time of the 1911 census, the oldest inmate was 26 years old. As identified in chapter six the LFP stood apart from other reformatory institutions in Liverpool because it operated as a non-sectarian organisation. Certainly, this non-discriminatory policy seems to have extended to age, with the oldest woman residing in 1911 being 42 years of age, and thus perhaps the LFP's average age of 25 is more indicative of Liverpool's broader prostitute population. Going back further in time, in their investigation into the policing of brothels in late Victorian Liverpool, Howell *et al* calculated the average age of a brothel worker – an aspect of the trade traditionally associated with older prostitutes and thus we can assume for this period the average age of a street-walker would have been lower – at the "relatively advanced age of 25" (Howell *et al* 2008: 244). In Howell's investigation into street prostitution in late nineteenth

century Cambridge he calculated the average age of a street prostitute at the point of regulatory intervention as 19 years old (Howell 2000: 387). The overall picture, therefore, is one where professional street-walkers in interwar Liverpool represented an older body of women than their Victorian and Edwardian predecessors and their Irish counterparts. Pinpointing when this change took place and understanding why is the next part of the challenge.

**Graph 9**



As Graph 9 above indicates, the trend of an ageing prostitute population may have taken shape during the interwar period itself. In 1918 the average age of a prostitute was 26 and by 1938 this had risen to 33. However, there are a few interpretative issues which must be considered for these two particular years which mark the beginning and close of the research period. Firstly, only six weeks' worth of the data from 1918 is based upon peacetime arrests. Given contemporary understandings regarding how the war impacted upon the practice of prostitution in Liverpool the representativeness of this figure is seriously questionable. Moreover, in a climate which predated the public and political furore surrounding the policing of prostitution which was to emerge in the 1920s, and at a time before the LCA provided the LCPF with the legislative capabilities to deal specifically with 'unknown women' soliciting, it is likely that the LCPF were able to regulate the public behaviours of young women much more freely, whether they were actually soliciting or simply acting in a way deemed troublesome. The problem with the figure from 1938 is that there was only one arrest of a common prostitute, or at least I have only been able to locate one such

incident in the court registers.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, even if only the years in between are considered, the overall trend is one of an ageing prostitute population.

So, the evidence certainly suggests that Everett was correct to attribute one of the reasons for the decline in street prostitution following the Armistice to the fact that “age was gradually working them [the street-walker] away” (TNA HO/326/7/10/1928). Yet, the evidence presented hitherto calls into question just how far this ageing prostitute population reflected a ‘natural’ increase as oppose to policing policies. Remembering that these figures are compiled only from instances of prostitution which resulted in arrest and given the preoccupation of the LCPF to legislate the *visible* aspects of the trade – whilst showing relative inertia towards more clandestine instances of prostitution and/or the prostitute – perhaps this trend was an indication of a ‘gulf’ which was arising between those who were able to participate in the more professionalised elements of the trade and those who through economic restrictions, age or maybe sheer choice continued to patronise the streets spatially and aesthetically in much the same way as they and generations before had traditionally done so. It is also worth bearing in mind that increasing frustrations regarding recidivist and older offenders meant that the CJS in Liverpool were keen to remove such women - and their influence - from the streets by way of imprisonment (in spite of recognising that this had little bearing upon dissuading such women from prostitution) and thus it is reasonable to presume that older women with longer offending histories were more likely to be arrested (and thus represented in these figures) than younger women. Finally, as amateur prostitution was seen to flourish in the early twentieth century, commentators argued that young women were more likely to engage in prostitution for brief periods as amateurs rather than entering full-time professional prostitution as their predecessors had traditionally done so. With the legislative capabilities opened up by the LCA to deal specifically with ‘unknown’ women, perhaps the ageing professional population is both an indication of smaller numbers of young women being recruited to professional prostitution and of how younger women were now being regulated under a separate legislative measure.

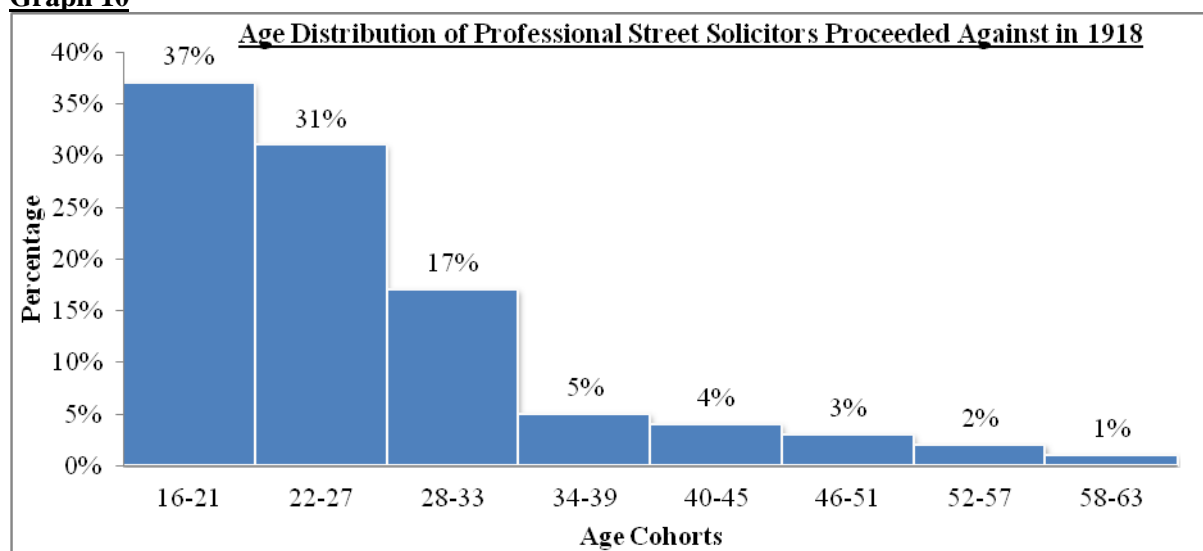
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<sup>3</sup> Note that by this time the statistical returns for prostitution and brothel offences appeared as an amalgamated category.



Graphs 10, 11 and 12 below break down the data for the sampled years into age cohorts in order to gauge more precisely the stages in life women were most likely to be involved in street prostitution (or at least at what stage they were most likely to come into contact with the police), and to establish if and how the distribution of age altered over the course of the period. Graph 10 illustrates that in 1918 a staggering 85% of arrests were made in relation to women under the age of 34, with the largest cohort of women being those in the 16-21 age range (37%). As discussed above, the proportion of younger women involved in prostitution at this stage may well be a reflection of the atypical conditions of war. Similarly, at the other end of the scale we may deduce that the lower rates of older women involved in prostitution could be the result of the temporary employment opportunities opened up by the war, the diminished resident male population and/or the prizing out of the market by younger women who had taken to a life of prostitution during the war (or at least whose behaviour around the troops deemed them prostitutes in the eyes of the law and whose existence reduced the demand for older prostitutes).

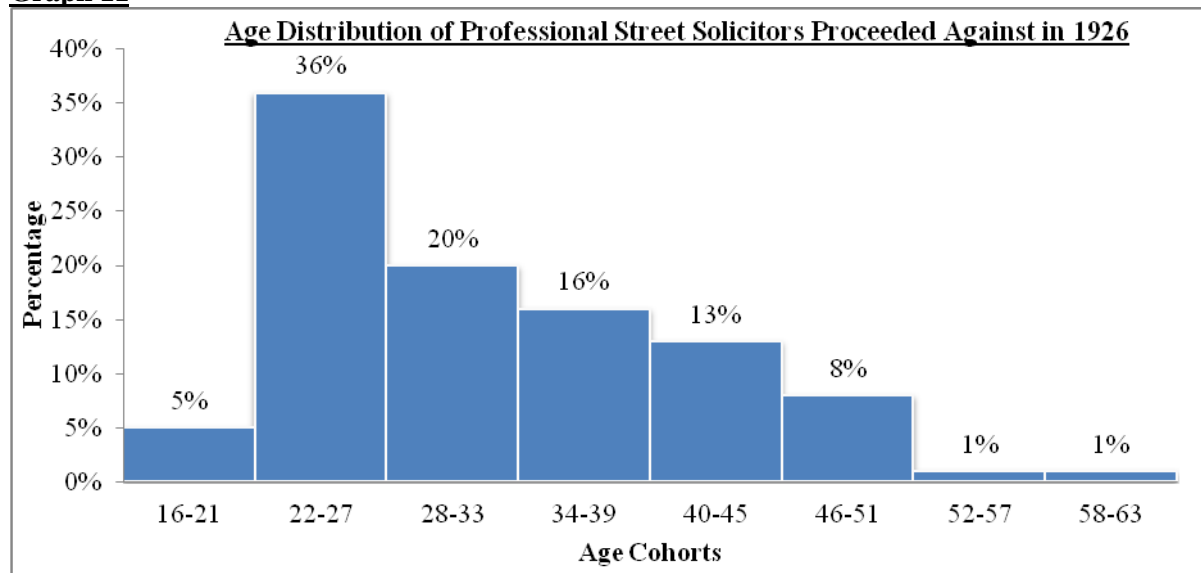
**Graph 10**



By 1926 the distribution of age had shifted considerably (Graph 11). This was most apparent in the 16-21 cohort with just 5% of arrests now being made in relation to women of this age. The percentage of women under 34 arrested had declined by 24% since 1918 to 61%. Why exactly these changes took place is difficult to ascertain, although it is crucial to note that the period between 1918 and 1926 had witnessed the introduction of the LCA, the retreat of military

personnel passing through the city, and the return of men from the frontlines, all of which would have impacted most strongly upon the younger cohorts. For example, it may have been the case that by 1926 women aged 21 and younger were more likely to have been dealt with under the LCA, at least in the initial stages of their offending. Interestingly, making use of the data available within the *Criminal Statistics for England and Wales* for 1924, 1925 and 1926, it is possible to discern that the picture on the national stage was very different, with the 16-21 cohort consistently representing the age group with the highest proportion of convictions (crucially not arrests) for prostitution. In 1924, this percentage share was 37%, in 1925 34%, and in 1926 35%.<sup>4</sup> Whilst the percentage of arrests continued to tail off as it had done so in 1918 with each cohort (with the exception of the 16-21 range), the fact that by 1926 women 34 and over now represented a larger proportion of those arrested (39% compared to 15% in 1918) calls into question just how far an ageing population translated into overall decline as Everett had suggested was the case. Was it not rather the case that an ageing population reflected more the decline in younger prostitutes, the tendency for the LCPF to target older prostitutes who continued to walk the streets, and/or a growing trend in older prostitutes pursuing the trade for longer periods of time?

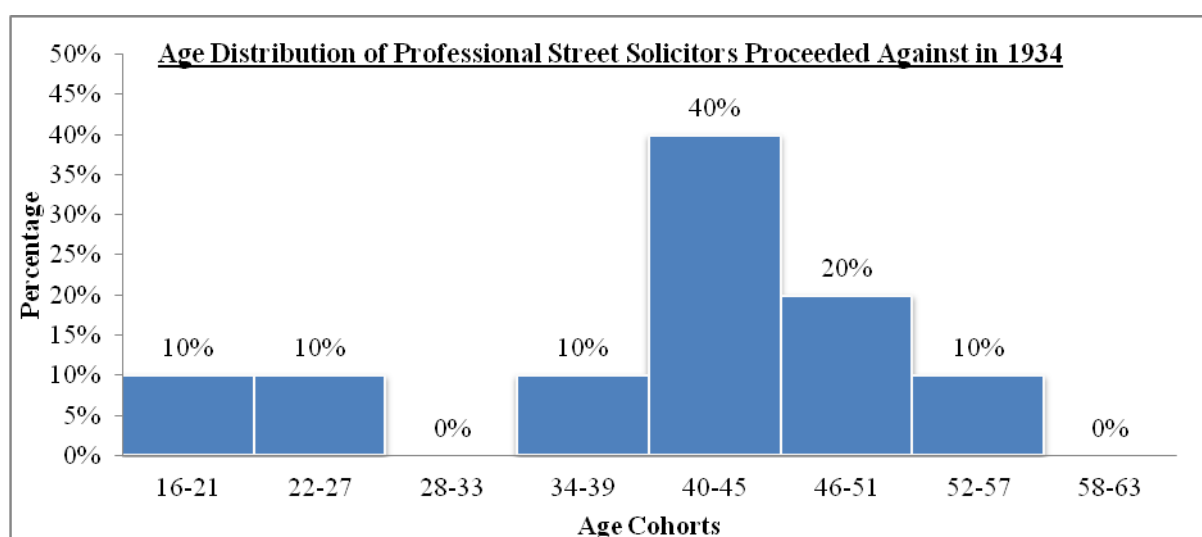
**Graph 11**



<sup>4</sup> Data regarding the age of prostitutes convicted across England and Wales is only available for the years 1919, 1924, 1925 and 1926. See, *Criminal Statistics for England and Wales: Statistics relating to Crime, Criminal Proceedings and Coroners' Investigations*, 1919, Cmd. 1424 (1921) / 1924, Cmd. 2602 (1926) / 1925, Cmd. 2811 (1927) / 1926, Cmd. 3055 (1928).

By 1934 the age distribution of professional prostitutes had shifted again. Those under the age of 34 now only accounted for 20% of prostitutes arrested, whilst those aged 34 and over now made up 80%. The largest cohort was represented by those aged 40-45 (40%), whilst no prostitutes aged between 28-33 and 58-63 were arrested. However, only ten arrests were made during 1934 against professional prostitutes, and thus it is very difficult – if not impossible – to make conclusions based upon such small figures. This in itself is of course very significant, given that in the midst of the economic depression so few women were arrested for prostitution offences. As chapter five illuminated, the declined rates may well reflect more the growing tendency for prostitutes to be arrested under the guise of various other public disorder offences such as drunkenness by the thirties than an actual, or such a drastic, decline in the actual practice of prostitution. Nevertheless, in spite of all the issues of interpretation and the difficulties in knowing why such changes in the age structure played out, the overall picture is one whereby Liverpool’s professionals were getting older as the period unfolded. Indeed, the experience in Liverpool could not have contrasted more vividly with the narratives explored in Section Two whereby prostitution was increasingly talked about as a trade saturated by young women and girls as amateur prostitution came to dominate popular, political and legal discourses. Indeed, the following findings go on to question just how accurate these discourses of the young amateur really were in the context of Liverpool.

**Graph 12**

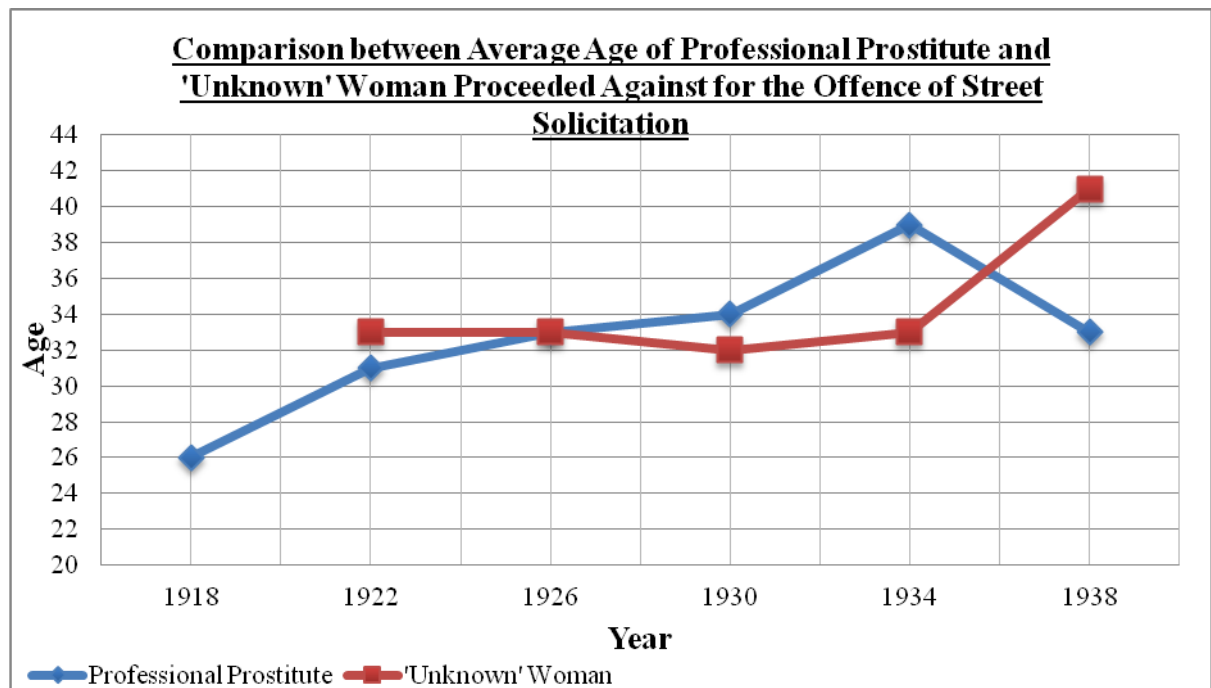


### **(7:3) Age of amateur prostitutes**

As this investigation has hitherto demonstrated, ‘age’ played a central role within early twentieth century understandings of prostitution. Age was the vernacular through which contemporaries

made sense of the route prostitution was seen to be taking, of identifying and categorising the prostitute and pathologizing her motivations. Similarly, political and legislative responses to prostitution were increasingly framed with age in mind. And, as chapters four, six and seven have shown, age was a key determinant in fashioning the parameters of regulation, the gaze and motivations of the regulators, and the treatment of the prostitute within and beyond the CJS. Specifically, as anxieties which had surfaced during the war over amateur prostitution came to gain permanency during the interwar period, prostitution was understood to be a phenomenon increasingly saturated by young women. Commentators and regulators alike consistently applied age-related adjectives to their appraisals of amateurs. They were called, for example, ‘little girls’, ‘young amateurs’ and ‘good-time girls.’ Concurrently, though probably not coincidentally, the period also gave way to a broader shift in political and legal attitudes towards the young, and saw increasing attempts for age-specific legislation in the quest to both appropriately protect and punish young women, as seen for example in the proposals of the SOB of 1918 and 1920. However, in interwar Liverpool the average age of an amateur prostitute – or ‘unknown’ woman soliciting as she was legally referred to – was 34 years old, and therefore as a collective amateur prostitutes represented an older body of women than their professional counterparts. The purpose of this section is to begin to consider how accurate, or applicable, broader conceptualisations of the amateur were to the experiences in Liverpool given the comparatively high age of amateurs and indeed what this high age can tell us about how exactly the LCPF exercised the LCA.

### **Graph 13**

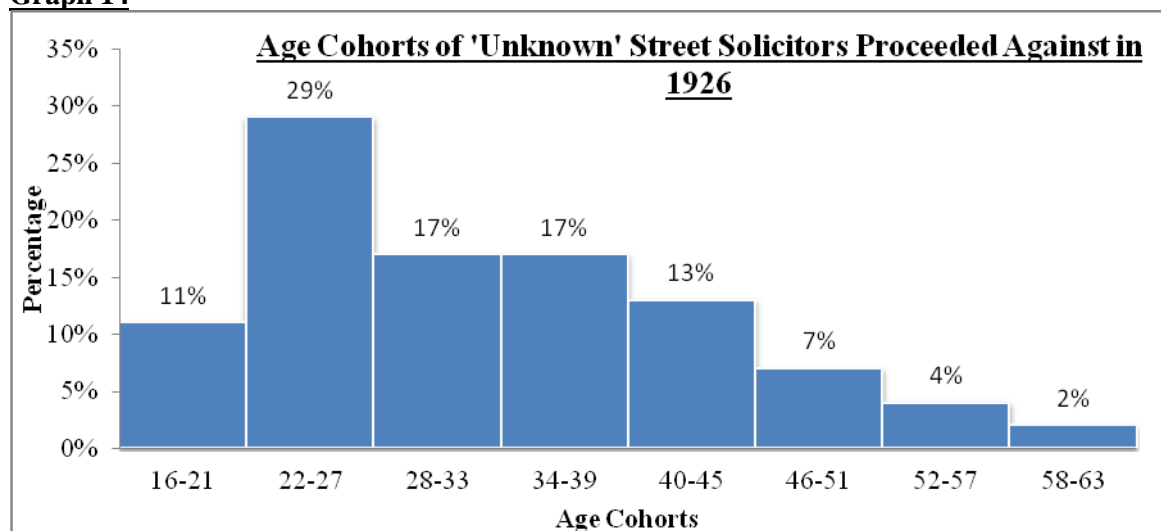


As Graph 13 above indicates, the age trajectory of the amateur cohort largely corresponded with the professional trajectory in the sense that over the course of the period they too represented an ageing group. However, whilst the age of professionals was increasing year on year up until the period between 1934 and 1938, the age of amateurs remained fairly consistent until 1934 only diverging from the 33 year old mark in 1930, and still this was only a decrease of a year to 32. From 1934 to 1938 the average age of the amateur group rose by 8 years from 33 years old to 41 years old, a figure which dramatically conflicted with broader conceptualisations of amateurs as ‘flighty’ young girls.

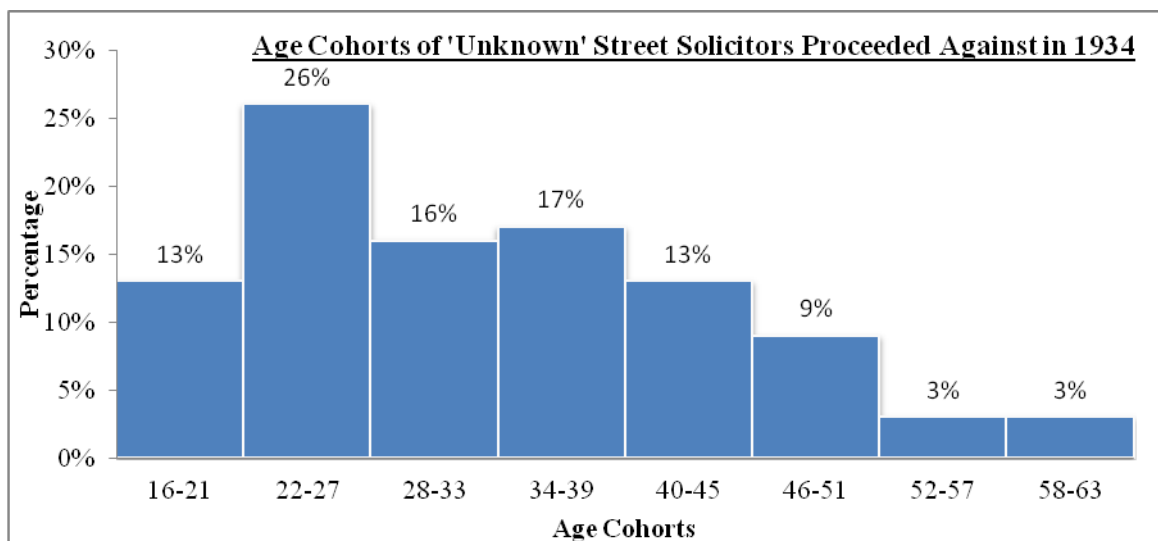
When this information is broken down into age cohorts for the years 1926 and 1934 it transpires that the age composition of amateur prostitutes diverged from that of professional prostitutes in a number of ways (see Graph 14 and 15). Firstly, the age spread remained fairly consistent between these years whilst as we have seen was the case with the professional the age spread continued to alter across the period. Secondly, the age spread was distributed much more evenly between the age brackets. In both 1926 and 1934 the largest cohort of amateur prostitutes were those in the 22 to 27 age range, and whilst the proportion of amateurs in the 16 to 21 bracket was bigger than that in the corresponding years from the professional composition, in 1926 only

41% of amateurs were under the age of 34 (compared to 61% in the professional equivalent). The impression created by these graphs indicates that amateur prostitution was an aspect of the trade engaged in by significant numbers of women from all age groups. This suggests that the LCA was being implemented in a fairly comprehensive fashion and was not simply aimed towards young women and girls' 'starting out' as Everett had claimed was the case in his evidence to the SOC. It also infers that prostitution was engaged in by women at different stages of their lives on a casual and short-term basis, perhaps in response to periods of economic difficulty, departing from the trade before the point at which they came to be legally recognised as 'common prostitutes'. This certainly would explain why from 1926 the number of women arrested as 'unknown' women consistently outweighed those arrested as 'common prostitutes' (see Graph 8). However, as the later section detailing the offending histories of prostitutes goes on to reveal, the LCA was frequently applied in relation to women who had already been legislated as 'common prostitutes', and thus questions how far the patterns emerging from the amateur cohort really reflected the evolution of prostitute cultures or were the manifestation of changing policing policies?

**Graph 14**



**Graph 15**

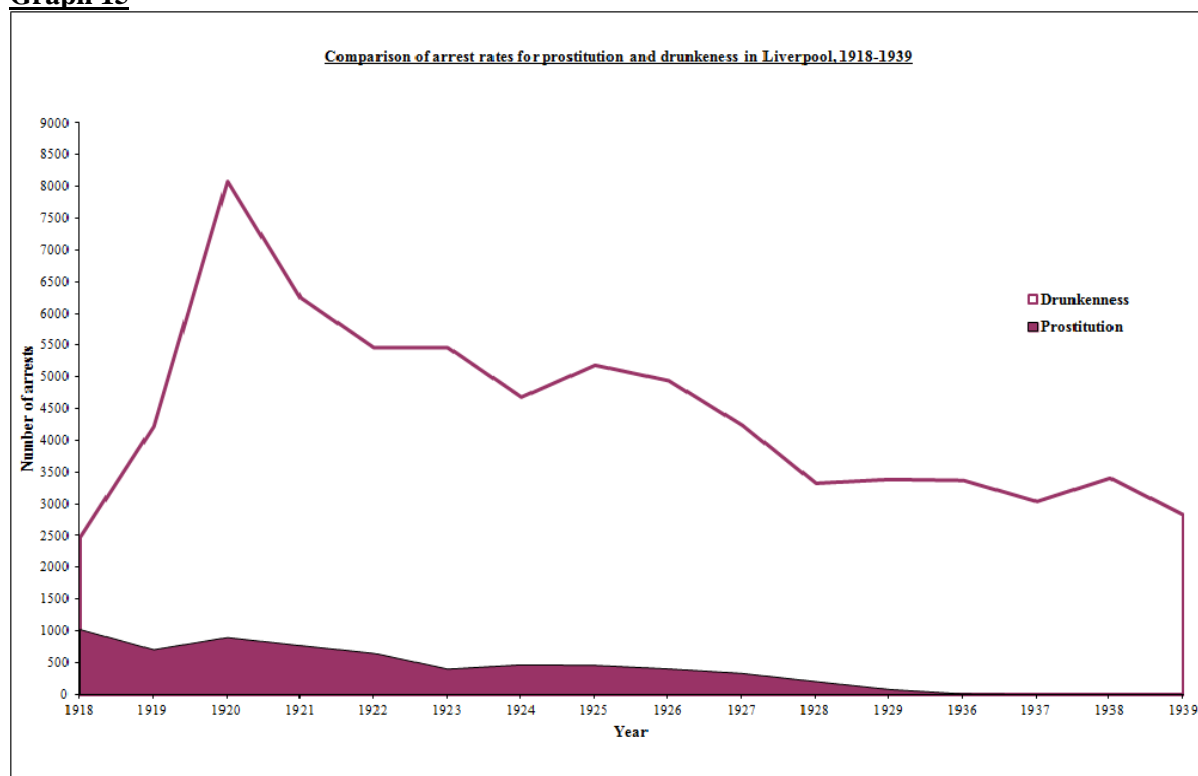


#### **(7:4) Drunkenness and prostitution**

As Hall noted in the early 1930s, “alcoholism and prostitution have long been closely associated” (Hall1934: 120). For commentators such as Hall and Stringer this relationship was understood to function in two main ways. Firstly, it was seen “as an element in the development of promiscuity,” whereby women’s first sexual encounters were often fuelled by the “partial intoxication of the girl,” and such experiences “may lead her to the adoption of prostitution” (ibid:120). Secondly, for women already engaging in prostitution alcohol was seen to be “indispensible” for “a vast number” of them who used it as a mechanism through which “to work themselves up to it” and to “enable themselves to go through with it” (ibid:120). By the middle of the research period, however, claims were being forwarded from the LCPF which suggested historical associations between alcohol and prostitution were wearing away in Liverpool. Although Everett argued that Liverpool’s prostitutes were more likely to conduct their business in “licensed houses and places of amusement more often than the streets” by the interwar period, he also insisted that rates of drunkenness amongst prostitutes were rapidly declining (LRO H352/2/WAT/1928). Compared to their Victorian predecessors, Everett described interwar prostitutes as now being “usually quiet and sober”, claiming that “the old type of half-drunken” prostitute was fading away (ibid: 1928). Speaking in early 1928, this was a change that Everett had observed to have taken hold over the course of the decade following the Armistice. This decline was attributed to the strengthening of the licensing laws by the mid-twenties, which included the compulsory mixture of pyridine in methylated spirits making it “most unpalatable” and decreasing consumption between 1924 and 1925 by about 40 per

cent (ibid:1925). As an interesting point of comparison, in prohibition America under the Volstead Law prostitution was frequently regarded to be “much more serious than before prohibition,” as the de-regulation of alcohol sales and consumption resulted in “liquor being given to boys and girls at a younger age than was possible in Licensed Saloons” (Stewart Cook 1930: 485). Indeed, as Graph 15 indicates, there does appear to be a correlation between declining drunkenness arrests in Liverpool from 1920 and the declining rate of prostitution arrests, although it is crucial to remember that the drunkenness levels refer to those offences committed by both males and females.

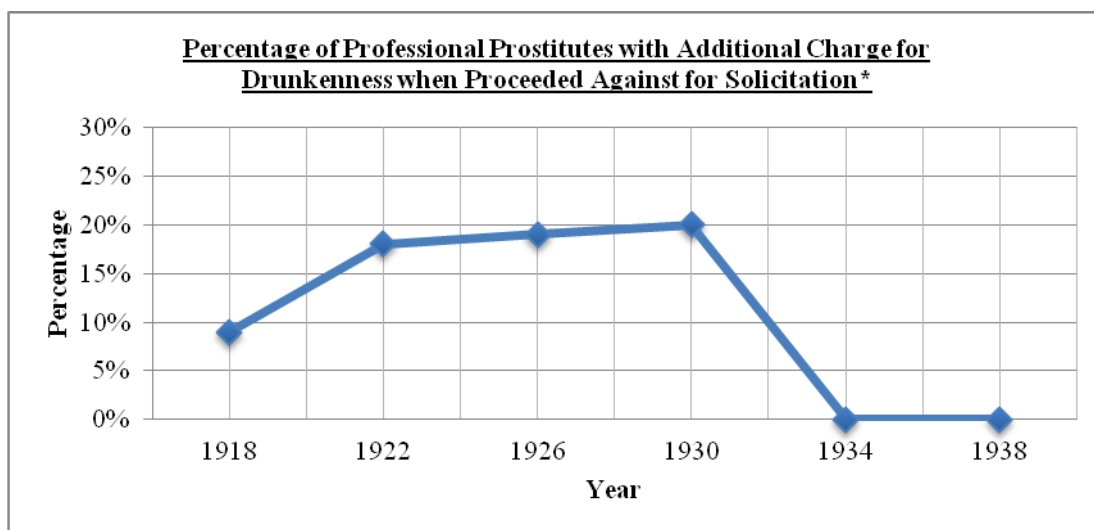
**Graph 15**





But were the city's prostitutes becoming more sober at this time? By recording every entry from the court registers pertaining to professional prostitution for the sampled years, it is possible to calculate that the average percentage of prostitutes recorded with an additional charge of drunkenness per year was 11.03% (i.e. cases where a woman was arrested as a common prostitute and for drunkenness at the same time).

**Graph 16**



The longitudinal trend of drunkenness rates over the research period (see Graph 16) suggests that Everett's observations were somewhat misguided, or at least somewhat premature. Whilst from 1922 onwards the numbers of drunken prostitutes were declining year on year, the proportion of drunken prostitutes was on the rise from 1918 to 1930. In fact, it is hardly surprising that the number of drunken prostitutes arrested was falling from 1922 since the total numbers of prostitutes passing through the courts were seriously dwindling across this timeframe. The proportion more than doubled from 1918 to 1922 rising from 8.95 % to 18.2%. From 1922 until the end of the 1920s the rate stabilised, increasing steadily to 19% in 1926 and to 20% in 1930. By 1934, however, no prostitutes were charged with the additional offence of drunkenness, and again in 1938 there were no cases of drunken prostitutes. Just as caution was levelled previously in relation to the analysis of professional ages, so too must it be pointed out that in 1934 there were just 10 instances of women arrested as common prostitutes, and in 1938 just 1. Additionally, given what we know about the tendency for the LCPF to charge and/or record prostitutes under the guises of various alternative public order misdemeanours by the thirties, the statistical data presented here does not mean that

prostitutes were necessarily no longer drunk by the mid-thirties. Indeed, casting attention back to the case of Fanny Kessler, according to the court records her offence in February 1934 was that of being 'drunk and disorderly in Lime Street'. As the registers of the JAPGW revealed, she was also charged with the offence of 'soliciting two men by the Crown Hotel, Lime Street.' Therefore, it is likely that prostitutes were still soliciting whilst drunk but that they were less likely to be arrested and/or recorded in the court registers as prostitutes. In light of these interpretative issues and questions of legitimacy regarding the data from 1934 and 1938, if we recalculate the average proportion of prostitutes arrested for drunkenness excluding these two years, the figure rises to 16.54%. It would seem then that a significant number of drunken prostitutes did persist into the interwar period, and, that in fact the average from 1918 to 1930 was higher than what it had been at the onset of the period in 1918, the time from which Everett claimed drunkenness amongst prostitutes was in retreat. However, we should be mindful of the informal policy of prostitution control which emerged at this time, whereby distinctions were drawn between the respectable and non-respectable prostitute and between the covert and overt practice of prostitution. In this climate, it is as equally fair to assume that the drunken prostitute who failed to solicit quietly and unobtrusively was more likely to be reprimanded, and thus this could have well impacted upon the increasing proportion of drunk prostitutes over the course of the twenties. For example, Elizabeth McLean was arrested four times over a two year period from 1918 to 1920. Each of her arrests for soliciting (3 under the TPCA and 1 under the VA) were accompanied with an additional charge for being 'drunk and disorderly', implying that she used alcohol whilst working and that also as a consequence she was liable to frequent arrests. Interestingly, McLean was aged 53 in 1918, some 27 years older than the average age of a professional prostitute in this year, indicating that drunkenness may well have been more synonymous with older prostitutes. The average age of a drunken prostitute in interwar Liverpool, however, was 32 years old, a year younger than the average age of a professional across the research period. This would suggest that firstly, alcohol was not necessarily used more by older prostitutes when working than younger prostitutes, and that secondly, when Everett said that age was working away the "old type of half-drunken" prostitute that he was both misinformed about the proportion of drunk prostitutes and the role age had as an influencing factor upon the statistics. As this section has illustrated, it would seem that drunkenness

rates amongst prostitutes were more conducive to police responses to prostitution. In the twenties this was in relation to the premium the LCPF placed upon the visibility of prostitution, with the corollary that those prostitutes who defied these codes of appropriate and tolerable prostitution and prostitute behaviour – such as the drunk – were left comparatively susceptible to legal intervention. In the thirties, this concern with visibility continued, although now it became an issue of making the prostitution statistics largely invisible, and as a result it is likely that prostitutes continued to be drunk – though probably not in such high numbers as they had traditionally done so – and thus the data from this decade are highly suspect. What has not been explored in this section is the rates of drunkenness amongst amateur or unknown prostitutes. This is because there was not a single instance of an unknown woman being charged for soliciting and drunkenness. Perhaps this infers that if a common prostitute solicited quietly and soberly than she had a good chance of being legislated under the LCA. In this sense, was the LCA a convenient measure through which the LCPF could deal not just with ‘unknown’ women but ‘known’ women who were working within the bounds of tolerated prostitution? This is something which is explored in the following section.

#### **(7:5) Professional prostitutes as an offending group**

The offending histories of 136 professional prostitutes have been recorded for the research period. Collectively, these women committed 602 offences and accounted for 14.6% of the total street prostitution offences made during the sampled years. As the previous section on age established, the average age of a professional prostitute at the point of arrest during the interwar period was 33 years old, a strikingly similar figure to the average age of this sample set which is calculated at 32.9 years. Using age as a point of reference, it is therefore suggested that this sample set is representative of the broader prostitute population, or at least representative of the broader prostitute population within the CJS.

#### **(7:6) Offending rates and spans: Professionals**

As identified in chapter three, the ‘successfulness’ of CJS interventions in deterring women from committing further prostitution offences was understood to be largely dependent upon the age of offenders. Thus, the picture created by the CJS is one where the offending rates of prostitutes typically fell into two categories; the young woman who ceased offending after experiencing legal intervention and the older recidivist offender who was unresponsive to the battery of punishments

available to magistrates. The average number of offences leading to arrest committed by the 136 professionals over the course of the sampled period was 4.4 per prostitute. As a point of clarity this investigation categorises women who were convicted of 3 or more offences as a 'habitual' offender. Using this marker it is possible to determine that of this dataset 52% were not habitual offenders (having been convicted of 2 or less offences) whilst 48% were habitual offenders (having been convicted of 3 or more offences). Breaking these figures down further reveals that of the 52% convicted of 2 or less instances of street prostitution an overwhelming 82% had only committed one offence, suggesting that the CJS were correct in their estimations that the use of probation and small fines with regards to new offenders was an adequate penalty in deterring future offences. However, that the proportion of women only offending once was so high – representing 47% of the total dataset – does give rise to a number of important questions. Given that to be charged as a 'common prostitute' under the solicitation laws required prior involvement in prostitution – at least theoretically – then how far can this cohort of women can really be understood as first-time offenders – and thus how much significance should be placed upon the success of legal intervention - is seriously questionable. If such women did have a history of prostitution offences where was such information recorded? Was it the case that they would have typically been charged as 'unknown' women under the LCA in the first instance/s? Were they likely to have received informal cautions and thus would have probably been 'known' to the LCPF for a period before entering the CJS? Or, does the high proportion of 'one-off' offenders suggest that the LCPF were frequently guilty of veering away from the written law when charging women for prostitution offences as 'common prostitutes'? Of course, given that these findings are based upon sampled years rather than the whole research period it is fair to assume that some of these women would have had additional offences registered in the years outside my sampled years, but nevertheless the overall picture is one where approximately half of professional prostitutes were non-habitual and half were habitual prostitutes.

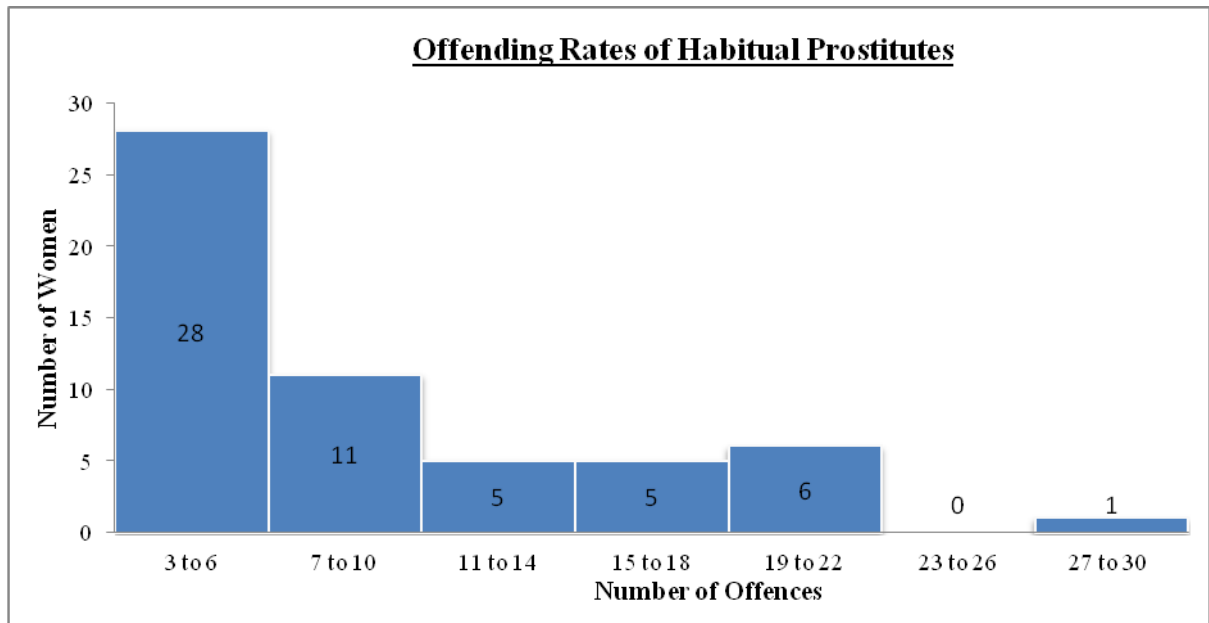
If the current solicitation laws were understood to adequately curtail prostitutes at the onset of their offending, then at the other end of the spectrum they were perceived to have little impact upon deterring habitual offenders. Indeed, as discussed previously in chapter three, frustrations

surrounding the habitual prostitute were not unique to Liverpool, as evident by many of the discussions within the SOC (1927-1928) and crystallised in the establishment of the Departmental Committee on Persistent Offenders (1931-1932) (see, *Cmd.* 3231/1928; *Cmd.* 4090/1932). When the SOC asked Deacon why “in spite of the fact that good order and decency in the streets is so much better than it used to be” – as indicated within the declining offence rates – prostitutes now face “stronger penalties”, his response was that these harsher punishments were aimed at “what we call the habitual offender” because “so many of them come back so often” (TNA HO/326/7/9/1928). Certainly, Deacon would have been speaking with women such as Mary Howard in mind. Howard was the most prolific offender of the dataset, incurring some 29 convictions for prostitution over the course of 11 years from 1918 to 1929; an average of 4.1 arrests per year.<sup>5</sup> She was arrested on 25 occasions for ‘loitering and importuning’ under the TPCA (offences committed prior to 1921 under the LIA), receiving a range of penalties from the option of a 40 shilling fine or 1 month imprisonment to a direct imprisonment of 14 days with hard labour. The remaining 4 instances of arrest were dealt with under the VA for ‘behaving in a riotous/indecent manner’ (2 cases) or for ‘carnal connection’ (2 cases), one of which led to her longest period of imprisonment for 3 months with hard labour. What is quite remarkable about Howard’s story – aside from the scale of arrests – is that the breakdown of her offending history by legislative measure was strikingly similar to that previously calculated for the period in chapter five (92% arrests made under TPCA and 8% under VA). Moreover, in only 4 instances was she arrested for ‘actual’ indecency, an indication no doubt of how much weight the LCPF placed upon ‘potential’ indecency and/or annoyance and the role they played in determining when and at what point this breach occurred.

### **Graph 17**

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<sup>5</sup> Based upon the years sampled for her offending period.

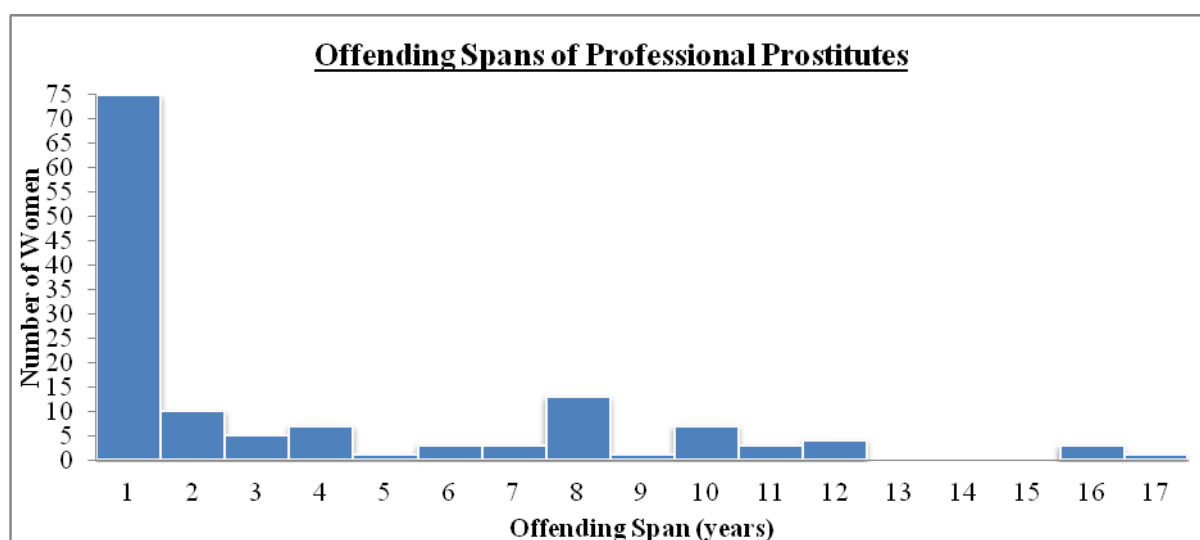


As Graph 17 illustrates, Howard was fairly exceptional in regards to the rate of her offending, with the majority of habitual (28 women or 50%) committing 3 to 6 offences. However, there were a significant number – if not proportion – of habitual prostitutes with extensive offending histories, with 6 women committing between 19 and 22 offences over the course of the research period, and 5 committing 15 to 18. Although empirical research into the offending histories of interwar prostitutes has been fairly limited, both Slater and Laite have made important arguments which appear to corroborate with the concerns voiced from Liverpool regarding habitual offenders. Firstly, Slater has explained the shift in age distribution from the early years of the twenties to the late thirties – where the percentage of women aged 30 to 39 now almost doubled those aged 17 to 23 – in terms of women “pursuing the trade for longer periods of time” (Slater 2007a:140). Whilst he offers no account of the offending spans or rates of prostitutes and his age data is based solely upon the registers from Bow Street Police Court, this idea that women were remaining in prostitution for extended periods is also forwarded by Laite. She argues that “rising female recidivism, combined with the falling arrest rate, meant that women who worked as prostitutes were fewer, but probably worked more often and were more criminalised than ever before” (Laite 2008b: 111). She goes on to state that “prostitutes were staying in prostitution longer and that the number of ‘casual’ prostitutes – women who sold sex only occasionally and for a short period in

their life ....were becoming less common” (ibid:112). The task now is to capitalise on the data I have retrieved from the court registers to see whether the picture in Liverpool was similar to that in London by establishing if women were offending for longer and working more frequently as the period unfolded, were habitual prostitutes receiving harsher penalties, was habitual prostitution engaged in predominantly by older women, and was ‘casual’ prostitution a less common feature of interwar prostitution than it had been in the Victorian context (note in this context ‘casual’ prostitutes refer to women known to be common prostitutes rather than unknown women)?

The average offending span of a professional prostitute in interwar Liverpool was 3.8 years.<sup>6</sup> In her study of female offending in late Victorian Stafford, Turner calculated the average length of offending for her dataset – based largely upon petty offenders (only 2 were convicted of serious crimes) – as just over seven years (Turner 2009: 214). Liverpool’s interwar prostitutes appeared to experience comparatively short phases within the CJS.

**Graph 18**



75 women (55% of the dataset) were involved in prostitution for a period of no longer than 1 year, with 10 women (7%) offending for a period of no more than 2 years (see Graph 18). The evidence from Liverpool, therefore, challenges Laite’s theory that ‘casual’ or ‘short-term’ prostitution had largely ceased to exist by the interwar period. As the results suggest for the majority of women – 62% - prostitution represented a brief stage in their life cycles rather than a prolonged career, a pattern which corroborates with White’s findings from his research on prostitution within his

<sup>6</sup> This figure refers only to the activity of prostitutes during the interwar period and thus it is likely that many of the women in this dataset may have prostitution convictions before and/or after this specific timeframe.

broader study into poverty in Islington between the wars (White 1979). Looking at the figures this way also questions how far the CJS should be credited for the short-offending spans and rates, or whether this reflected more the actions and choices of individuals rather than the reactions and interventions of the justice system.

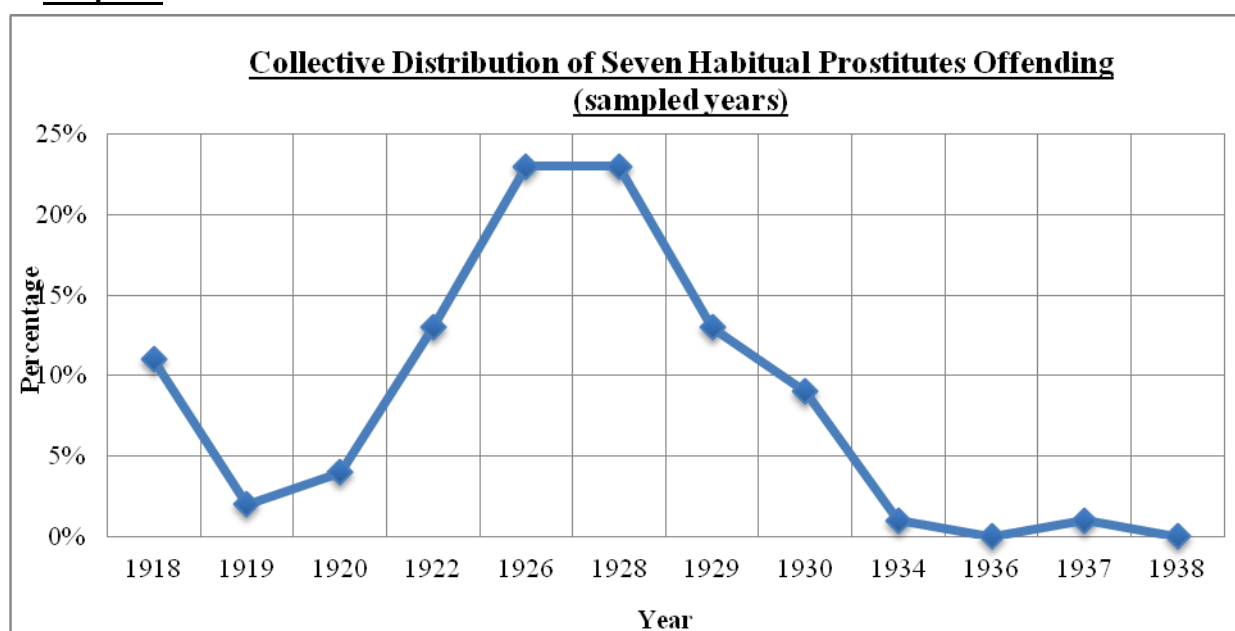
However, just as Deacon and Everett made distinctions between the success in curtailing short-term and/or new offenders on the one hand (illuminated in the high proportion of one-off and short-time offenders) and the difficulties in dealing with persistent and/or habitual offenders on the other, Graph 18 does show that there were a significant number of women who were involved in prostitution for extended periods. If we sharpen the gaze to include only the experiences of those women classed as habituals then the average span jumps to 6.9 years, a similar return to that of Turner's dataset. The modal offending span of a habitual prostitute was 8 years, a figure which suggests that women were still engaging in prostitution for long periods of time. However, there were 4 women whose involvement in prostitution only spanned a single year (or less) but who in this time had been convicted of enough offences to be classed as a habitual prostitute. For example, Mary Gallagher aged 25 was convicted of no less than 6 offences in the space of 8 months between January and August 1928. At the other end of the scale, Sarah Johnson had an offending history which lasted 17 years. Johnson began offending in January 1920 (at least her first recorded offence for the research period) at the age of 43 and received her last conviction (her eleventh) in August 1937 at the age of 60. Interestingly, the experiences of Gallagher and Johnson draw attention to the fact that a high or low offending span did not necessarily translate into a high or low offending rate. This is further captured in the experiences of Agnes Devon, for example, who offended only twice over a period of 10 years from 1918 to 1928, and thus was not a habitual offender but was strictly speaking a long-term offender. These are the nuances of prostitution sometimes lost in the categories employed to analyse and talk about quantitative data, and which can only come to light when analysis is conducted at the individual level.

Constructing a longitudinal analysis of the data, the attention now turns to see whether as the research period unfolded women were working longer and more often as both Slater and Laite have



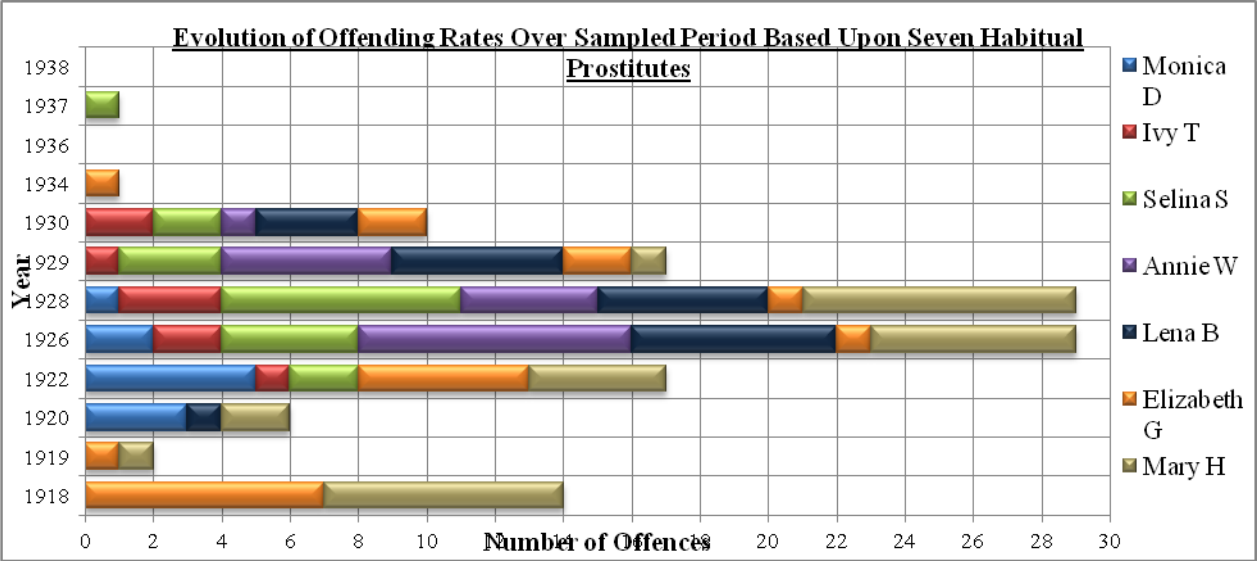
posited. Using the point at which women within the habitual cohort ceased offending it is possible to argue that in Liverpool women were not “pursuing the trade for longer periods of time” by the thirties (Slater 2007a: 140; Laite 2008: 112) . In fact, 67% of habitual prostitutes had their last conviction recorded against them in the twenties, whilst 90% of the 33% who continued to offend into the thirties appeared for the final time in the registers in the first half of the decade. Thus, only 3% of the habitual cohort were engaged in prostitution by the end of the research period, the very time that Slater argued London’s ageing prostitute population reflected women’s likelihood to remain in prostitution for longer. Moreover, when the age at cessation of the habitual cohort is taken into consideration it would appear that this body of women were not particularly old. The average age of a habitual prostitute at the point of departure from the CJS was 36.7 years. Whilst this figure was some 3.7 years higher than that of the average age of the broader professional population – calculated above as 33 – when the average offending span of a professional – calculated above at 3.8 years – is added to this figure it is possible to ascertain that on average professionals left the CJS at 36.8 years. Not only do these figures challenge historical assumptions and subsequent scholarly arguments which both conceptualise habitual prostitution as an aspect of the trade typically patronised by older women, it also calls into question how far ageing should be recognised as a motivator in women’s desistance from the trade in the context of Liverpool (a point I will return to in chapter eight).

**Graph 19**



As Graph 19 indicates, the offending trend in Liverpool does not correspond with Laite’s argument that habitual prostitutes were engaging in prostitution more frequently as the period evolved. Based upon the offending histories of seven habitual offenders, Graph 19 shows that convictions peaked in the years in the middle of the period 1926 (23%) and 1928 (23%). From 1934 onwards the percentage of offences fell to its lowest levels, with this cohort committing just 1% of their collective offences for the sampled years in 1934, 0% in 1936, 1% in 1937 and again 0% - or no offences – in 1938. Laite also contends that the operation of the solicitation laws which served to stigmatise prostitutes – and indeed were dependent upon such stigmatisation in the sense that the police identified and then dealt with women as common prostitutes based upon previous activity – meant that as a prostitute’s offending career lengthened she “would be more frequently arrested” (Laite 2008b: 111).

**Graph 20**



Whilst Laite’s assumption is perfectly logical – i.e. the longer and more frequently a prostitute works the greater likelihood it is that she will be recognised as a common prostitute – as Graph 20 demonstrates (based upon the individual offending histories of the seven habitual prostitutes also considered in Graph 19), this pattern did not necessarily play out in interwar Liverpool. Even if we concentrate exclusively on the period 1918 to 1930 (before the point from which the prostitution returns declined dramatically) in not one of these seven cases did a woman experience consistently progressive conviction rates year on year. Again using 1930 as the cut-off point only in the case of

Ivy T did any of these women have a higher number of convictions against her in the final year of offending than the total number in the year in which she received her first conviction (or at least first conviction within the research period).

As this section has sought to illuminate it is both difficult and often misleading to talk about an archetypal figure of the prostitute or a typical form of prostitution in interwar Liverpool. The evidence tends to espouse the importance of reading the nuances, the individual experiences and stories which at once made up the collective patterns examined above but could just as easily depart from them. Although, this is not to say that patterns did not emerge, and interestingly it appears that such patterns may best be understood through the concept of dichotomy. For example, an offending dichotomy can be traced whereby approximately half of the dataset were short-term offenders (2 years or less) and half were long-term offenders (3 years or more). Similarly, approximately half were non-habitual offenders (2 or less convictions) and half were habitual offenders (3 or more convictions). Although, as we have seen being a habitual offender did not necessarily mean being a long-term offender and being a short-term offender did not necessarily mean being a non-habitual. Additionally, judicial responses to prostitutes in court were made along distinctions between the young and new offender and the old and repeat offender. However, it is the evidence of a chronological divide between the twenties and thirties which is most compelling. So, for example, whilst the habitual offender remained a constant source of concern and frustration prior to the thirties, from 1930 onwards she – like the broader prostitute population – was fading away, until the point at which she largely ceased to exist by the latter years of the decade. If professional prostitution remained a significant problem in 1920s Liverpool, then by the end of the 1930s it had virtually disappeared. But where had Liverpool's professional prostitutes gone? Why had they disappeared from the records? And why given the economic difficulties facing Liverpool's populace were prostitutes seemingly retreating from prostitution at the very time the wider labour market was retracting? Was this the manifestation of a move towards the professionalization of prostitution which Everett had noted taking place in the aftermath of the Great War? The answers, I argue, may well lie in part within the offending histories of the amateur prostitute.

### **(7:7) Amateurs charged under the LCA**

As established in the earlier section on age, individuals charged under the LCA as ‘unknown women’ soliciting were not necessarily the “flighty” and “careless, ill-mannered young women and girls” they were conceived to be in both the popular consciousness and locally within the regulatory material (LRO H352/2/WAT/1928; TNA HO/326/7/10/1928). In fact, collectively they represented an older body of women than their professional counterparts. Interestingly, this was not the only area in which conceptualisations of who the amateur was and why she engaged in sexual relations with the opposite sex departed from the ‘reality’ of the situation in interwar Liverpool. By piecing together the offending histories of the 136 professional prostitutes considered previously, it is possible to determine that 51% of them had experienced a conviction or several convictions under the LCA. Given that this was the legislative measure applied to instances where women soliciting were not known to be ‘common prostitutes’ perhaps this depicts nothing more than the evolution from amateur to professional prostitution. However, when such convictions are contextualised alongside their broader offending histories, it transpires that in 69% of individual cases women were convicted under the LCA after already having received a conviction under the solicitation laws whilst the remaining 31% received a conviction/s under the LCA before going on to receive further convictions as common prostitutes. Using this information as a reference point, this section seeks to gain a deepened understanding of how exactly the LCA was implemented, with what aims in mind, and with what consequences. How far do the individual offending trajectories of interwar prostitutes challenge or support, for example, broader contemporary theories that amateur prostitutes were likely to – in time - become professionals? How far do they call into question the accuracy and/or significance of the declining prostitution statistics and the legitimacy of the LCPF’s regulatory policies? How do they alter the data previously examined on offending rates, spans and ages? And, how useful is it for historians to talk about interwar prostitution through the dichotomized categories of professional and amateur given the degree of overlap between them, and more importantly, how does this overlap challenge the scholarly tendency to exclude amateurs from studies of prostitution?

### **(7:8) Amateurs becoming professionals?**

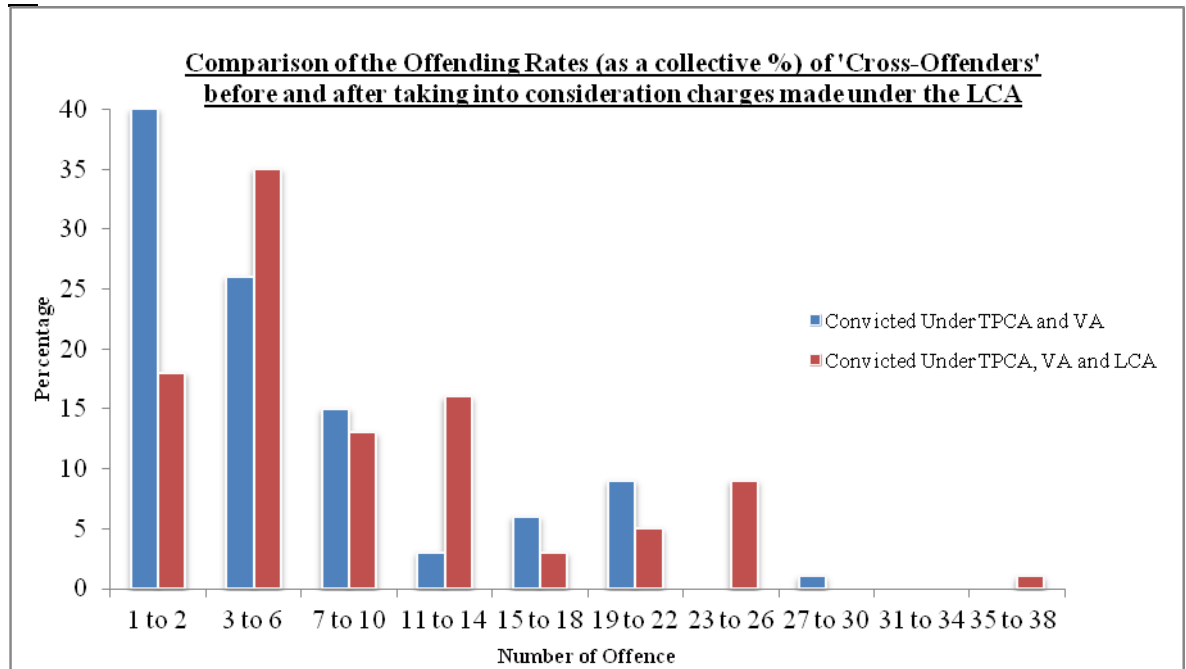
In interwar Liverpool, as we have seen was the case in Britain more broadly, the amateur prostitute presented somewhat of an anomaly. As the responses from the CJS in Liverpool have shown for example, the amateur could at once be conceptualised as a reckless and “ill-mannered” figure driven by greed but also a vulnerable figure whom required and deserved rescuing from her own personal downward spiral and the influence of “old and hardened offenders” before she fell into a lifetime of professional prostitution (LRO H352/2/WAT/1928; TNA HO/326/8/26/1927-1928). Indeed, many of the anxieties surrounding the amateur were rooted in this belief that professional prostitution represented a ‘natural’ progression from amateur prostitution, but was this necessarily the case and if so how did this process unfold? As mentioned above, 31% of the sampled cohort of professional prostitutes who experienced conviction/s as ‘unknown women’ soliciting had been dealt with under the LCA before going on to receive further convictions as common prostitutes. On average, a woman committed 1.4 offences as an unknown soliciting before receiving a conviction for soliciting as a common prostitute over an average period of 2.2 years. This suggests that the LCA represented a fairly convenient means through which the LCPF could still legislatively control women for soliciting without having to necessarily resort to the solicitation laws, thus avoiding accusations of heavy-handed policing and wrongful arrests. Additionally, a woman only needed to have a slight offending history as an unknown – average of 1.4 offences – before she could be dealt with as a common prostitute, and in this sense the LCA appears to have acted as a legitimate and relatively quick gateway between amateur and professional prostitution from the perspective of official regulator. Of course, many women who had convictions under the LCA did not go on to become professional prostitutes, or incur multiple convictions as unknown women. For example, for the year 1922 193 individuals were charged as ‘unknown’ women soliciting collectively incurring 230 arrests. Of these individuals 44% went on to – or indeed had already – incur/red additional offences as ‘common prostitutes’, whilst 66% did not make the transition from amateur to professional prostitution. The overall picture, therefore, suggests that in actuality it was not a natural progression from amateur to professional prostitution, with the majority of amateurs departing from the CJS after just one conviction. For example, the 66% of women from 1922 who did not move from amateur into professional prostitution had an average of just 1.2 convictions each over the whole sampled period

However, at the same time the line between the two forms of prostitution was – in terms of regulatory responses – a fine one in the sense that an individual did not have to have many convictions against her as an unknown (on average 1.4) before she was legally recognised and dealt with as a professional. Interestingly, therefore, the anxieties of the CJS in Liverpool – and elsewhere – regarding the vulnerability of amateur women being drawn into a lifetime of prostitution were fairly exaggerated, although at the same time it was the very responses of the CJS which made the boundaries between the two so slight.

#### **(7:9) ‘Cross-offenders’**

Turning the gaze back to the original dataset of 136 prostitutes, and more precisely the 51% of whom had incurred convictions as both common prostitutes and unknown women – individuals who shall from now be referred to as ‘cross-offenders’ – it is necessary to reconsider the offending rates, spans and cessation points of these women in light of the additional information we are now privy too. This has a particular significance given that 66% of ‘cross-offenders’ were dealt with as unknowns after having received previous conviction/s as a common prostitute – on average women had received 3.7 convictions as professionals before being convicted as ‘unknowns’ – and that a massive 87% of ‘cross-offenders’ had mixed offending histories. That is to say that after the point of having been convicted as a common prostitute (regardless of whether their first conviction was as a professional or unknown) 87% of women then went on to be arrested as unknown women. Or, in other words, in only 13% of cases did the offending trajectory follow that a woman started her career as an unknown, went on to become a common prostitute and then did not revert back to being an unknown.

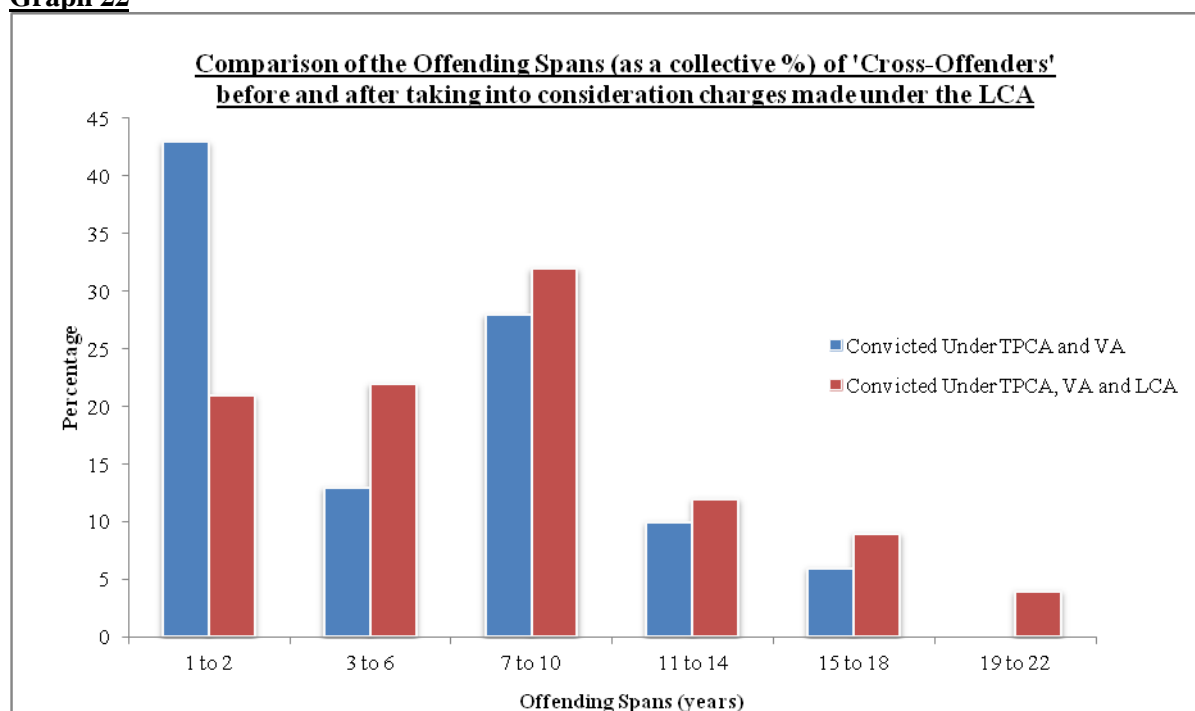
**Graph**  
**21**



When we reconsider the offending rates of professional prostitutes in light of their additional charges incurred as unknown women soliciting, the average offending rate alters from 6.3 offences per prostitution to 9 offences per prostitute. It also transpires that the proportion of these individuals categorised as non-habituals declines dramatically. 40% of the 'cross-offending' cohort were classed as non-habituals in relation to their offending activity legislated under the TPCA and the VA, but when their experiences of arrests under the LCA are taken into account only 18% remained strictly speaking as non-habituals (see Graph 21). At the other end of the spectrum the proportion of women who offended more than ten times increased significantly from 19% to 34%. The largest amount of convictions accrued by a professional prostitute as an unknown woman soliciting was 8. Interestingly, this individual was Mary Howard, the same woman who had previously incurred the highest offending rate as a professional (29 as a professional rising to 37 as a 'cross-offender'). Presumably, given her prolific offending history Howard would have been well-known to both the constables who patrolled the streets and the magistrates whom she stood before in court, implying that the CJS were purposely drawing upon the convenience of the LCA to legislate common prostitutes with the corollary that the official statistical returns for prostitution – which crucially did not include the LCA – would decline. Indeed, the case of Howard elludes to the rather haphazard and lateral way in which the LCA was implemented, with her eight convictions as

an unknown occurring after the point in which she had been convicted as a common prostitute and before her final conviction as a common prostitute. Ultimately, the evidence presented here shows that in actuality Liverpool's interwar prostitutes were offending at much higher rates than previously thought.

**Graph 22**

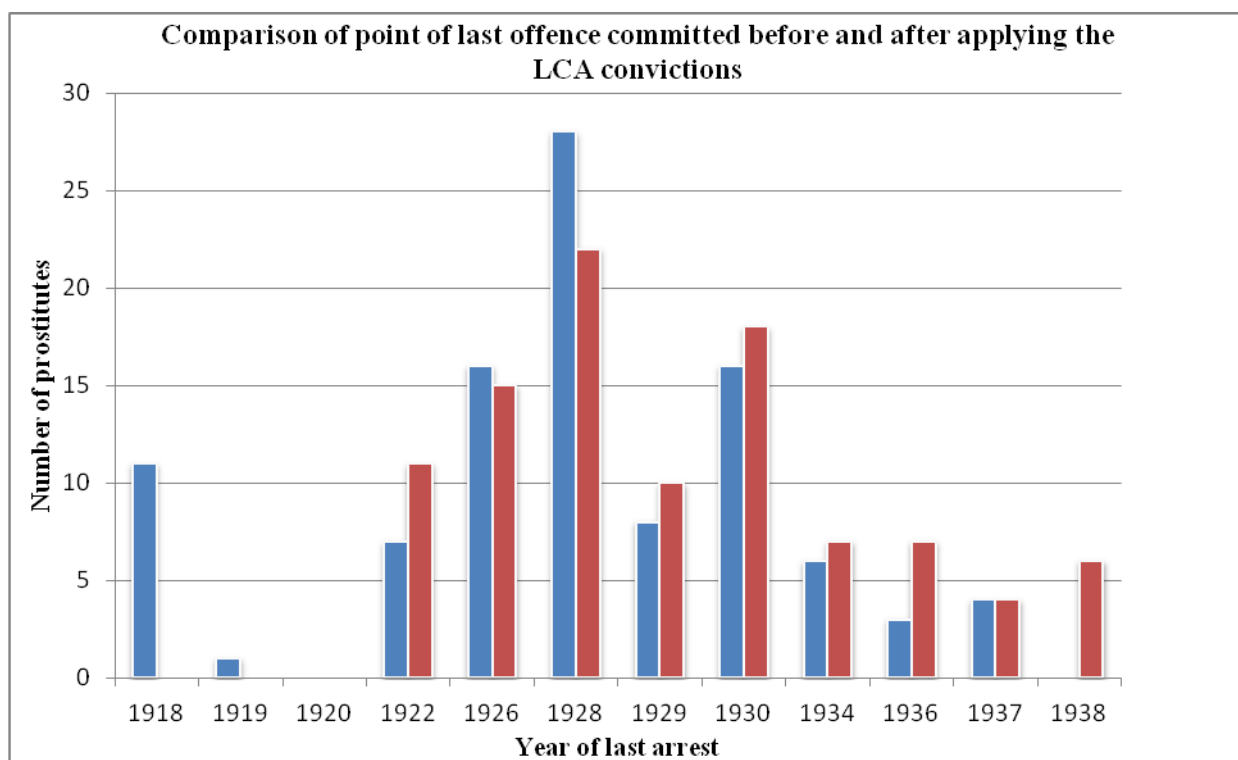


Taking into account the LCA legislative measures exercised against these women a similar pattern emerges regarding the revised offending spans of 'cross-offenders'. The average offending span of the 'cross-offending' cohort rose from 5.6 years to 7.9 years. In terms of short-term offenders – those offending for two or less years – the proportion declined by over half from 43% to 21% (see Graph 22). The proportion of women offending for a period of more than 10 years increased from 16% to 25%. Previously Sarah Johnson was identified as the longest offending prostitute, engaging in prostitution for a period of 17 years. After the charges made under the LCA are correlated onto this data the longest offending prostitute was now Nellie Griffiths, who offended for 20 years



between 1918 and 1938. Interestingly, Nellie's offending span doubled when her legislative experiences as an 'unknown' were included (her last offence as a professional was recorded in 1928), and therefore this point of disjuncture both challenges the theory that Liverpool's prostitutes had disappeared by the thirties and moreover offers an explanation as to where they actually went.

**Graph 23**



In many ways Graph 23 is the most important for it challenges the earlier data presented which constructed a fault-line between prostitute activity in the twenties and thirties, whereby essentially prostitution had virtually ceased to exist by the latter part of the thirties and professionals most commonly stopped offending in the late twenties. Applying the information from the LCA convictions it is possible to recalculate the average year in which prostitutes ceased offending – or at least departed from the CJS – from 1927 to 1930. Whilst this still indicates a chasm between the decades, we can deduce that previously only 29% of the cross-offending cohort continued to offend into the thirties whilst now in light of the LCA data 42% were engaging in prostitution into the thirties. Together, the revised data on offending rates, spans and points of cessation paints a much more nuanced picture of prostitution. It suggests that prostitutes experienced a mixed-legislative record for their activity as prostitutes following the implementation of the LCA in 1922. It was

probably no coincidence that as the official criminal returns for prostitution fell as the period unfolded, professional prostitutes were progressively being arrested as ‘unknown’ women. When this information is viewed alongside the findings from chapter five whereby a culture of concealment emerged which led to the legislating of prostitutes under the guise of various other public disorder charges – most commonly drunkenness – it is fairly reasonable to presume that in actuality prostitution rates were not declining as quickly and in such high numbers as both the official statistics suggested and the judicial representatives of interwar Liverpool said they were. Whilst the CJS placed a premium on protecting amateurs from the influence of professionals – as consolidated in the LCA provision which restricted young girls from frequenting common lodging houses where common prostitutes resided – ironically, the way in which the LCA and the solicitation laws were used interchangeably to deal with the different ‘shades’ of prostitution meant that at times the CJS were somewhat narrowing the conduit between the two figures. Establishing why these laws were applied so haphazardly is harder to determine. Firstly, it may have been the case that the LCPF were making use of the LCA as a means of avoiding both wrongfully identifying women as common prostitutes and accusations of heavy-handed policing in a climate where public and political attention increasingly focused upon the liberties of the prostitute. Indeed, the *Instruction Book* advised officers to veer on the side of caution in cases where there was doubt over the offending history of woman, and in this sense the LCA represented a convenient tool through which to navigate the hostile and potentially loaded solicitation laws. And, it would seem that Liverpool’s citizens were fairly familiar with the way these laws were used interchangeably. If we turn our attention back to the case of Rogers and Tames, their anger at being arrested was fuelled by the synonymy broader public disorder legislation had with solicitation at this time, in spite of Constable Browne claiming that “he never suggested that the girls were soliciting, but that they were annoying men” (*TT*, 7 May 1930). Just as Pheterson has contended that ‘street immorality’ is frequently a euphemism for prostitution, in interwar Liverpool the charge of ‘annoying men’ was commonly understood to be a by-word for solicitation (Pheterson 1996: 10). Secondly, by considering the geography of offending it appears there was a link between women known to be common prostitutes incurring arrests under the LCA whilst operating outside their usual spatial parameters. The mixed-legislative experiences of prostitutes, therefore, may in part reflect nothing

more than instances whereby they have not been recognized by the constable as a common prostitute nor subsequently the magistrate in court. For example, on March 21<sup>st</sup> 1926, nine women were arrested as ‘unknown women’ soliciting in Warbreck Moor, Aintree. It was on this day that the Grand National was held at Aintree Racecourse, with Warbreck Moor being the main thoroughfare which connected the racecourse to Aintree Station. Interestingly, only one woman was arrested as a common prostitute soliciting at this location on March 21<sup>st</sup>, although six of the nine ‘unknowns’ had previous convictions as common prostitutes, some with quite prolific offending histories. In fact, this pattern appears periodically within the court registers across the sampled years, and it is probable that some 6 ½ miles north of the city centre, Aintree’s constables were unaware of the offending histories of these women who typically roamed more central locales. Interestingly, back in the mid 1800s century Hugh Shimmin had identified the ‘Aintree Meeting’ as an event where “indecorous and unbecoming” behaviour thrived within the drinking tents as Liverpool’s aristocrats and merchants gathered amongst the young girls whose faces were “daubed with paint” and persons “adorned with highly coloured dresses” (Walton 1991: 75). It would seem that by the early twentieth century the city’s prostitutes continued to patronize Aintree in much the same way as their Victorian predecessors had done so, although there appears to be a clear policing distinction between tolerating prostitution within the tents and making sure the main thoroughfares which surrounded the racecourse were free from visible vice. Thirdly, as previously examined, it appears that into the thirties the CJS were increasingly drawing upon the LCA to arrest women they knew to be common prostitutes in order to generate and/or exaggerate the impression of improvement.

#### (7:10) Resistance and compliance

Just as Walkowitz, Littlewood and Mahood have all challenged a monolithic reading of the transaction of power between regulator and regulated by highlighting prostitute strategies of resistance in the reformatory sphere, in interwar Liverpool attempts at control by the police and magistrates were frequently mediated by moments of prostitute resistance. As illuminated earlier in this chapter, one way in which this could be expressed was through spatial resistance, whereby prostitutes plied their trade in various locales to avoid recognition as common prostitutes. This

section demonstrates how resistance could also manifest itself in physical assaults against police constables and/or the physical damage of police property. It could also take the form of deception whereby prostitutes gave false names (aliases) in the hope of avoiding the more severe punishments. An alternative reading of agency may also be found in the tactic of compliance in court, where guilty pleas were deployed as a means of passing through the CJS as quickly as possible.

There were a total of 27 cases of prostitute violence against LCPF personnel for the sampled years of 1922, 1926, 1930, 1934 and 1938.<sup>7</sup> Broken down in accordance to prostitute category, this equated to 18 assaults made by women arrested as ‘common prostitutes’ and 9 assaults made by women arrested as ‘unknown women soliciting’. Essentially, prostitute violence was minimal, occurring in less than 1% of the total proceedings taken against professional and amateur prostitutes in the sampled years. Such low figures challenge interwar narratives which constructed the prostitute as a figure who reacted aggressively and irrationally to police intervention. For example, in the early 1930s, Hall argued in her investigation (largely based upon her experiences of Liverpool), that; “when or if the prostitute falls into the hands of even the most kindly of men police, her reaction to male interference is often violent anger” (Hall 1932: 123). On the other hand, these ‘atypical’ cases are significant given that such incidences frequently resulted in women incurring far higher penalties than that which they did for the original offence of prostitution, and that the localities identified in these cases may reveal further information regarding the process of arresting and transporting prostitutes to the bridewells.

Typically these assaults took place at the scene of arrest – 15 out of the 27 cases, 9 by professionals and 6 by amateurs - and thus can be described as an immediate and/or instinctive response to police intervention. For example, in late August 1926 Madge Dent, aged 29, was arrested in Lime Street by Constable Edward Pope for the offence of being a ‘common prostitute wandering and behaving in a riotous manner’. Presumably during or shortly after the point of arrest

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<sup>7</sup> The year 1918 has been excluded because of the lack of comparative data for this year given that the legislating of unknown women soliciting only came into existence following the enactment of the LCA in 1921.

Dent proceeded to assault Pope, thus incurring an additional charge against her. When she appeared in the police court the following day she pleaded 'not guilty' to both her original prostitution offence and the subsequent assault charge. She received the option of a 40 shilling fine or 1 months imprisonment for both the offences, which was a fairly lenient response given that normally assault of a police constable resulted in an automatic prison sentence (and usually with hard labour). Four of the remaining cases of assault took place at a location away from where the arrest was made and presumably on the journey to the nearest bridewell (3 assaults by professionals and 1 by an amateur). Using this information it is possible to surmise that prostitutes were physically walked to the bridewell by the police constable/s following arrest, and usually through the city's main thoroughfares as oppose to the back streets. For example, in 1922, a woman who had been arrested as a 'common prostitute loitering and importuning' in Grove Street - an area east of the city centre in the shadows of the university campus - assaulted the constable in nearby Catharine Street a major road joining the Toxteth area to the city centre, presumably en route to the nearest bridewell at Olive Street. Another similar case from 1922 occurred when a woman who had been initially arrested in Stafford Street - a side street just a few roads away from Lime Street - was charged with assaulting the constable in Prescot Street, the main road which ran adjacent to the Royal Liverpool Infirmary and into the residential area of Kensington. This approach, we can presume, no doubt created somewhat of a public spectacle whereby prostitutes were escorted through the city's streets by the beat officer to the nearest bridewell, and was perhaps a point of antagonism for some women leading them to vent their frustrations and objections through physical violence. Other women - 8 from the sampled years, 6 professionals and 2 amateurs - waited until they had reached the bridewell before proceeding to attack the police constable/s that had arrested them or alternatively bridewell staff. So, for example, in June 1926 Elizabeth Simon a 29 prostitute was arrested for soliciting in Ranelagh Street - one of the main streets in the entertainment district of the city - but it was not until she was at nearby Warren Street Bridewell that she carried out an assault on Constable Clayton. For this offence she pleaded guilty and received a penalty of 14 days hard labour. A particularly fascinating case of prostitute violence within the bridewell came in 1930 when Mary Raheim a 23 year old prostitute was taken to the main bridewell in Dale Street following her arrest for 'being a common prostitute wandering and behaving in an indecent manner

by having carnal connections' in Preston Street. After spending the night in custody, Raheim then went on to attack Hannah Aspinall the female warder on duty in the main bridewell. Interestingly, Hall had claimed that "the hysterical outbursts of many prostitutes when 'taken' by men police will often calm at once if a woman colleague can be found to take charge of her, and the impression made by the prostitute will be correspondingly different" (Hall 1932: 123).

Another way in which the raw emotions of prostitutes following the point of arrest can be seen is in acts of vandalism to police property. There were seven such incidences recorded in the registers over the course of the sampled years. Typically, such acts were levelled against the policing paraphernalia carried by constables at the scene of arrest. For example, on the 31<sup>st</sup> December 1925, a police constable was assaulted by Mary Howard, a 31 year prostitute as he arrested her for soliciting in Commutation Row. Howard proceeded to continue her attack on the constable by damaging his police helmet, presumably a symbolic act of her disregard for his profession and the institution he served. A similar incident occurred a few months later when Madge Peters a prostitute with a long history of convictions was arrested in London Road for soliciting and decided to vent her anger by damaging the constable's police whistle. Other assaults took place back in the police station as women occupied their time in custody whilst awaiting court by inflicting damage upon the cell interiors. For example, Ellen Shufflecotton received one month's hard labour – a punishment twice as long as what she received for her original solicitation offence – for smashing a pane of glass with the value of 20/ in her cell at the main bridewell in March 1926. In 1922, another woman was arrested for "damaging a blanket and pillowcase calculated at 6/ in the main bridewell" as she awaited her hearing for a prostitution charge. Interestingly, just two months before she smashed a pane of glass in her cell, Ellen Shufflecotton had been charged with assaulting another well-known prostitute back in the bridewell after they had both been arrested in Commutation Row, and in June of 1926 she was again charged with assaulting a constable in the execution, an offence for which she went on to receive two more charges for in 1928 and 1929. Yet, whilst these cases are undoubtedly fascinating, it is important that we are not seduced by the salacious and acknowledge that statistically they were few and far between. The actions of Ellen, for example, presumably say more about her personal reactions to

legislative intervention rather than that of the broader prostitute population *per se*, but this is not to say that acts of physical resistance were insignificant.

But if the above cases spoke of the exceptional then the use of aliases was a more common method of resistance deployed by prostitutes. In 1930, for example, 8.4% of street prostitution arrests listed in the registers contained alterations to the original name entered. Although the likelihood is that this is a conservative approximation of the actual numbers deploying aliases, given that its very purpose was to ultimately escape the police's attention prior to arrest – a woman had to be known as a common prostitute to be arrested – and/or avoid harsher punishments by being equated with a history of convictions. Some prostitutes used several aliases such as Lily Walker who also went by the name of Gertrude Parry and Annie Warburton and Madge Dent who was known by no less than four other names. In a city where up until the early 1930s there was anywhere between 1500 and 400 convictions per year against prostitutes, adopting aliases would have almost certainly been a successful mechanism in avoiding recognition both on the street and in the court. As the following chapter illuminates, there was also a practice adopted by some married prostitutes whereby they worked under their maiden rather than married names, although as I posit, the purpose of this tactic was probably distinct from that of those women noted above.

Whilst the lens of resistance has been frequently employed by historians of prostitution as a means to avoid reproducing and ultimately challenge discourses of victimhood and subjugation, there has been less attention placed upon prostitute compliance. Yet the evidence from Liverpool's court registers suggest that compliance was in many ways a more common and constructive way of obtaining personal control and agency within the CJS than resistance. Indeed, a high proportion of guilty pleas expressed by the professional cohort infers that 'submission' to the CJS was frequently deployed by those who sought to move through the system quickly and with minimum fuss in order to 'get out' and ultimately back to work in the shortest timeframe possible, and even secure a lesser sentence in light of their admissions of guilt. Based upon every recorded plea for the sampled years of 1922, 1926, 1930 and 1934, it is possible to calculate that in 44% of professional cases a guilty plea was entered, whilst in the amateur cohort only 31% of cases recorded a guilty plea. Given

what we have established previously with regards to the lateral imposition of the laws – and thus the significant numbers of common prostitutes being legislated under the LCA – it is difficult to draw firm conclusions from these differing proportions, although it is likely that resignation to conviction amongst the professional cohort was comparably acute and/or that there was a greater understanding amongst professionals that CJS interventions were a hazard of the job. So, for example, on 18<sup>th</sup> April 1928 Madge Peters – a prolific offender – was arrested in London Road for soliciting. She pleaded guilty and was subsequently imprisoned for 14 days. Just 6 days after completing her sentence, Madge was arrested on 6<sup>th</sup> May for soliciting in Stafford Street. Again she pleaded guilty and received 14 days imprisonment. Little more than a week after being released she was arrested again, although this time her guilty plea resulted in the option of 40/ or 1 month imprisonment. On 29<sup>th</sup> November 1919 Florence Bache was arrested for soliciting in Lime Street, a charge for which she pleaded guilty and received the option of 40/ or 1 month imprisonment. Presumably Florence paid the fine (crucially the registers did not detail in cases where a fine or imprisonment was offered which option was taken up) as just 2 days later she was arrested again for soliciting in Lime Street. This pattern of guilty pleas quickly followed by further offences was not unique, and whilst it is difficult to know whether Madge's and Florence's compliance was a conscious attempt at avoiding the most severe of punishments, it is patently obvious that for these women – and others – CJS interventions did little to deter their involvement in prostitution, even days after appearing in court.

As the cases detailed above exhibit, for some women CJS interventions had little bearing upon their offending, whilst for other women such interventions could provoke them to commit further offences in the form of assault and criminal damage. It is the purpose of the following chapter to contextualise the offending histories of a sampled set of prostitutes against their personal experiences to determine how exactly prostitution featured in their broader life stories.



### (8:0) The dataset

This chapter provides a ‘whole-life analysis’ of twenty-seven prostitutes. Collectively, these women incurred 167 arrests for prostitution offences over the course of the research period.<sup>8</sup> Broken down by offending category, this translated as 124 arrests for professional prostitution, 36 for amateur prostitution, and 7 for brothel-related offences. Four of the twenty-seven women offended as professional prostitutes, four as amateur prostitutes, five as brothel managers, keepers and/or assistants, whilst the remaining 14 were cross-offenders whereby they were legislatively dealt with as both professional and amateur prostitutes and in two of these cases also as brothel offenders as well. The average age of the dataset was 32.5 years old, a figure very similar to that calculated in chapter seven both in relation to the entire professional (33 years) and amateur (34 years) populations for the sampled years. In 13% of the 167 instances of arrest, there was an accompanying charge of drunkenness, a proportion which broadly accorded with that in the whole prostitute population as established in the previous chapter. Yet, whilst the representativeness of the dataset no doubt adds weight to the stories relayed below, it is just as important to avoid instinctively allowing the personal to speak of the collective as it is to avoid making assumptions about the local and micro levels based upon experiences at the national and macro levels. The personal experiences presented here are intended to represent the final piece of the analytical jigsaw, as well as a vehicle through which to focus, revisit and critically re-examine some of the key themes and arguments which have surfaced over the course of this thesis. Moving the analytical gaze to the individual level is particularly pertinent given that it is this layer of analysis which has hitherto been absent or diluted in historical studies of British interwar prostitution.

### (8:1) Geographical origins, nationalities and heritage

This analysis of the dataset begins by looking at where these women began their lives. It has been possible to trace the geographical origins of 26 out of the 27 prostitutes. Liverpool was recorded as the birthplace of just over 85% of the dataset (22 women), whilst only 15% - or 4 prostitutes – were born outside of Liverpool. Of the women originating from outside of Liverpool, one was born in

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<sup>8</sup> The sampled years are 1918, 1922, 1926, 1930, 1934 and 1938.

nearby Crosby, one in Swansea, one in London and one in Portadown, Northern Ireland. By locating this information within the context of the broader make-up of Liverpool's population and against contemporary discourses surrounding prostitute origins, this section argues that these findings are interesting on a number of levels.

By the early twentieth century Liverpool was globally recognised as a cosmopolitan and vibrant seaport city, a gateway and landing stage for passengers moving in to, out of and through Britain. Interestingly, however, the largest immigrant group in Liverpool was not those who had entered via the port, but those who had come from the neighbouring counties of Lancashire and Cheshire seeking alternative employment opportunities as industry and farming in their native areas declined from the late nineteenth century onwards. The city's status as Britain's second largest seaport meant that invariably English-born sailors and their families formed a substantial proportion of its settler population. In particular, sailor families from the smaller ports and coastal areas of Devon and Cornwall had relocated with the anticipation that permanent residency in Liverpool would allow them more time to spend with their relatives whilst on leave. Yet, in spite of the scale of domestic movement into city, Liverpool still had "a smaller proportion of its population of English origin than any other big English city" (Jones 1934: 68). This was not, however, a consequence of foreign immigration rather the influx of citizens from other parts of the British Isles. For example, since the mid-nineteenth century a steady stream of economic migrants from North Wales had come to Liverpool, the nearest large city. Without an urban industrial centre of its own and with a comparatively small maritime sector, Liverpool offered a broader range of employment opportunities, particularly for Welsh women whose prospects largely centred around agricultural activity. Similarly, Scottish shipbuilders and sailors, mainly from the Clydeside area, came to Liverpool in the late nineteenth century seeking to share in its booming shipping industry, alongside wealthier compatriots who continued to form a substantial part of the city's business and mercantile class well into the twentieth century. But it is the Irish immigrant who has become synonymous to Liverpool's immigration history, and indeed, to the city's experience of prostitution.

The results of Jones' 'Household Survey' conducted from 1929 to 1930 - in which 7,000 families across Merseyside were sampled with a 93 per cent return rate – suggest that the Irish

connection has been somewhat overstated. Information collated by the Survey Department regarding the birthplace of each household member indicates that 16 per cent of the sampled population were born outside of Merseyside, a figure strikingly similar to the 15% of prostitutes born outside of Liverpool from my dataset (ibid: 70). A breakdown detailing where exactly immigrants came from is provided below:

Table 4 ‘Percentage of Total Sample of Merseyside Immigrants Born in Other Areas (1929-1930)’ (ibid: 70).

Lancs.	Cheshire.	London.	Rest of England.	Wales.	Ireland.	Scotland.	Isle of Man.	Foreign and Colonial.	Total.
18.1	7.4	4.3	31.8	10.6	15.2	6.9	2.2	3.5	100

The data shows how over a quarter of immigrants came from the adjoining counties of Lancashire and Cheshire, with a combined total of 61.6 per cent of settlers having been born in England. Irish immigrants made up the largest share of settlers from other parts of the British Isles with 15.2 per cent coming from the Free State and Northern Ireland. If we look at the figures provided by the Free State Department of Industry and Commerce and The Shipping Company which carried passengers between Ireland and Liverpool for the period 1927 to 1929, it would appear that many immigrants ultimately settled in areas outside of Merseyside. For 1927 the number of Irish and Northern Irish immigrants arriving in Liverpool was 6,735, for 1928 it was 6,173, and for 1929 it was 5,090. If we use these figures as an indicator for the average movement into Liverpool from Ireland for the period 1921 to 1931 (5,999 average per year) then we can approximate that over the decade some 59,993 Irish arrived in the port. Between the same years the total population of Liverpool grew by 52,748, thus even without considering the sway the rates of natural increase had upon growth it is clear that a significant proportion of Irish immigrants were passing through the city rather than residing there.

The findings from my dataset indicate that this tendency to overemphasise the Irish presence in Liverpool within the popular imagination has also extended into both historical and popular understandings of the Irish presence within prostitution. The evidence from the interwar period departs from mid to late nineteenth century estimations which positioned prostitution in Liverpool

as a trade heavily saturated by Irish women. In the mid 1860s, for example, Father James Nugent a Roman Catholic priest who in 1863 was appointed as the first Catholic Chaplain to Walton Goal, recorded in his first annual report that over 60% of Liverpool's "law breaking prostitutes" were Irish women (Belchem 2007: 84). Even by the closing decades of the nineteenth century at a time when the numbers of Irish immigrants into Liverpool had dissipated after the 'influx' which had followed the initial decades after the Great Famine of 1845-1852, ideas about Irish women's 'overrepresentation' in prostitution still remained in circulation. In the mid 1880s, F.W. Lowndes, the surgeon for the LCPF and the Lock Hospital, argued that 44% of prostitutes taken into custody by the police hailed from Ireland (Lowndes 1886: 3). For Lowndes, however, the 'problem' with Irish prostitutes was not just connected to their volume but also to their behaviour. They were, he claimed, the "lowest and most degraded class of prostitutes ... resorted to by the numerous negroes always present in Liverpool" (ibid: 3-4). They lived and worked in the "very worst streets" in Liverpool's north end, the same streets which were populated by the black sailors and labourers to whom they offered their 'services'" (ibid: 3-4). In their recent research on brothel workers in late Victorian Liverpool, Howell et al have challenged what they refer to as this "caricature" of the Irish prostitute forwarded by nineteenth century commentators such as Lowndes (Howell *et al* 2008: 235). Using the census returns from 1881 to identify those women proceeded against for brothel offences in the previous year, 1880, they found that "a mere 15 per cent were Irish – and this is a figure almost exactly proportionate to Liverpool's Irish-born population as a whole" (ibid: 244). Interestingly, this 'caricature' of the Irish woman as prostitute and/or promiscuous has frequently been uncritically reproduced by historians. For example, in her analysis of the racialisation of sexual deviance in Liverpool at the time of 1919 race riots and Britain more broadly, Bland contends in response to a newspaper article which claimed that "there are women in Liverpool who have no self-respect," that "although no mention is made in the reports as to their ethnicity, it is possible that many of the women were Irish, given the high numbers of Irish in Cardiff and Liverpool at the time" (Bland 2005: 36). This assumption is not only misleading because Bland fails to quantify or qualify it in any way, but also because my analysis reveals that by the interwar period, the proportion of Irish women involved in prostitution was even smaller than that established by Howell et al, with just one woman from my sample originating from Ireland. Mary

Ann Houston, born in Portadown in 1879, had relocated to Liverpool at some stage after the 1901 census and before the birth of her daughter in 1906. Interestingly, Houston was the eldest prostitute within the dataset, perhaps an indication that by the interwar period Irish prostitutes were likely to be drawn from the older cohorts, a symbol of a Victorian association which was diminishing. Only five of the women from the dataset – or 19% - had Irish parentage (either one or both parents). For example, both Catherine Furlong's mother and father were born in Wexford, and according to the census returns had migrated to Liverpool at some stage between 1871 and 1881. Together, the low number of Irish prostitutes and low levels of Irish parentage amongst the prostitute cohort implies that by the early twentieth century Irish migrant women in Liverpool were not disproportionately involved in prostitution. The overall picture, therefore, suggests that historically – and subsequently within the popular psyche - Irish women's involvement in prostitution has been unfairly inflated, whilst highlighting the dangers in applying nineteenth century experiences – or rather conceptualisations – to the context of the interwar period.

Arguably, the most striking observation to be drawn from Jones's Household Survey is that regarding the extremely low percentage of immigrants born outside of Britain living on Merseyside between 1929 and 1930. The census returns state that there were 9,459 'foreigners' living in Merseyside in 1921, or at least residing there on the day that the census was taken, a factor that must be considered in relation to any seaport with a large transient population. Of these 9,459 'foreigners' however, 2,052 had been naturalised and were therefore legally British subjects. Furthermore, although it is not possible to quantify how many, it must be noted that included within this figure were all British born women who had married foreign men since they were now defined by the nationality of their husbands birthplace rather than their own. Methodological issues aside however, it is clear that between the census of 1911 and the census of 1921 the number of 'foreigners' recorded had decreased by 2,314, dropping again by 2,731 between 1921 and 1931. As identified earlier, this picture of a declining foreign population in interwar Liverpool is at odds with contemporary responses to immigration and its links with prostitution and may in part be explained by the fact that Merseyside residents who had been born in the British Dominions and Colonies were not regarded as foreign subjects within the returns. They accounted for 6,054 of the county's

population in 1921, and interestingly the number of persons within this category was growing – by 1,320 over the period 1911 to 1921 – at the same time as foreign immigrant figures were diminishing. Set against the backdrop of imperial and economic decline, responses to immigration were increasingly framed along racial and sexual lines. Specifically anxieties over miscegenation and mixed-race children proliferated as the period gave way to, as Belchem and MacRaild have noted, “repeated moral panics about the growth of black (and Arab) settlements and the wholesale dumping of ‘coloured seamen’ in Liverpool” (Belchem and MacRaild 2006: 379). These racial panics informed and fuelled contemporary narratives of prostitution. As previously examined, whilst concerns over ‘white slavery’ were largely without foundation during the interwar period, in this climate of socio-economic dislocation and cultural upheaval associations of foreignness and prostitution flourished in many quarters. In Liverpool, such associations were captured, for example, by the Vicar of Pitt Street who informed Priestley that “most of the little halfe-caste girls – those smiling exotic dolls – would, within a year or two of leaving school, become prostitutes, following the family tradition of the quarter,” captured popular beliefs (Priestley 1934: 181). Whilst the census returns provide no information regarding the ethnicity of individuals, the immediate ancestry of my dataset – i.e. parentage – implies that in all probability these prostitutes were not mixed-race. With regards to ‘foreignness’ more broadly, Slater has shown that whilst the number of foreign prostitutes passing through London’s courts was negligible, for the Metropolitan Police “foreigners constituted ... a special threat that needed special attention” (Slater 2007a: 174). In April 1936 these anxieties were consolidated in the establishment of ‘The Secret Foreign Prostitutes and Associates Album’, which contained photographs and details pertaining to “foreign prostitutes and their associates” (ibid: 174). However, official responses in Liverpool appear to depart from the stance taken by the Metropolitan Police, in spite of the city’s ‘special’ status as a large port city. When asked by the SOC whether there existed “a number of alien prostitutes who come from abroad to Liverpool,” Everett stated, “no – very few” (TNA HO/326/7/10/1928). And, the information provided from my dataset indicates that rarely did prostitutes come from immigrant families either. In only 3 cases did a prostitute have a parent/s who had originated from outside of the British Isles; two women had Russian parentage and one had a mother who was born in America. For example, both Fanny Kessler’s mother and father – and her eldest brother – were

Russian born, and appear to have arrived in Liverpool at some point between 1891 and 1894. In September 1904, it is recorded that Kessler's father became a naturalised British subject, and thus alike to many of Liverpool's foreign born residents would not have been included in the statistics regarding the city's foreign population (<http://www.british-jewry.org.uk/jcnaturalisations.php>).

In Liverpool, there was very little evidence to suggest that official policies were cultivated to deal specifically with foreign prostitutes, although as we have seen the LCPF did respond fervently to incidences where domestic prostitutes were seen to 'mix' with black and/or foreign men. The overall picture emerging from both the 'expert' material and the analysis of my dataset is one where prostitution in interwar Liverpool was a trade typically engaged in by British women, and more specifically, local women born within the city. In this sense, Liverpool's prostitute population, it could be argued, reflected the broader retraction of foreign migration into the city by the early twentieth century.

#### (8:2) The age of the dataset at entry into and desistance from prostitution

The next part of this analysis is concerned with establishing the average age at which the women from my dataset entered prostitution, or more precisely, experienced their first interactions with Liverpool's CJS, and the age at which they departed from prostitution. Of course, it is difficult to produce an entirely precise figure given that some of these women may well have begun their offending careers before the start of the research period and ended it after, and equally, they may have incurred their first or last charge in a year which has not been sampled. Bearing these interpretative issues in mind, however, the average age at entry into the CJS has been calculated at the rather advanced age of 27 years. The 'actual' average age at entry into prostitution was in all probability a few years younger than this figure if we take into account the issues laid out above and also consider that many of these women would have been able to elude the attention of the regulators for a period of time following the start of their offending. Whilst there is a lack of comparative data at present which details prostitute ages at the point of first arrest, findings from early twentieth century investigations tend to espouse a conflicting picture. In *DP*, for example, it was argued that over half of their sampled prostitutes had entered prostitution before the age of 18

whereas a negligible number entered after the age of 21 (Royden ed., 1916: 33). By contrast, in their inquiry from the mid-thirties, the League of Nations contended that their surveys had revealed that the majority of prostitutes had “taken to a life of prostitution over the age of 21 and therefore will had, ordinarily, over 7 years of working life” (TNA PCOM/9/141/1931-39). Once again, the notion that prostitution was being increasingly saturated by younger women and girls by the interwar period seems at odds with the statistical information emerging from my dataset. The average age at which the dataset ceased to offend was 34 years. If we omit those women who were one-off offenders from the calculation – given that they entered and left the CJS at the same point – then this figure rises to 36.7 years. Still, however, it seems that ageing was not a significant factor in the desistance of offending. Indeed, when contextualised against other studies which have looked at desistance this number appears to be strikingly low. For example, in her study of a broader range of petty offences committed by women in late Victorian Staffordshire, Turner has indicated that the majority of offenders left the CJS between the ages of 60 and 70 (Turner 2009: 251). But, one must remember that prostitution represented a unique form of offending in that its success was not just reliant upon the offender but upon the male to want to engage in sexual activity with the woman, and thus ageing may have been a more prominent factor at an earlier stage of the prostitute’s life than say the thief’s. What can be deduced with more confidence is that prostitution represented a relatively short period in these women’s lives, that in the main they had left it behind them at an age at which reintegration and hegemonic experiences such as marriage and motherhood were still viable. That is not to say that many of these prostitutes did not go on to engage in other types of offending outside of prostitution, something sadly time nor scope can afford within this investigation.

### (8:3) Marriage and prostitution

“There has been a good deal said and written of late on the subject of marriage. The Press, in fact, has been besieged by a heterogeneous group of writers who probably imagined they were the prophets of Modern Nineveh. From the elderly episcopal [sic] bachelor to the thrice-divorced revue actress, there has flowed a volume of opinion purporting to show that marriage is falling from its former grace and that social morality is on the decline.” [Vero W. Garratt, *English Review*, 1923]



Historically, prostitution has been posited as the antithesis to marriage. It has been conceptualised as a threat to the institution, whether in the sense that prostitutes were understood to operate outside the boundaries of respectable feminine sexuality, that as individuals their profession led them to delay or completely reject marriage, or in that their services offered men both an alternative to marriage in the form of pre-marital sex and/or undermined marriages by providing men a source of extra-marital sex. Interestingly, marriage was frequently regarded as a ‘ticket’ out of prostitution, the route to relative economic stability and the means through which feminine emotional and sexual needs could be met legitimately. As Bartley has also shown, the reformatory programmes of the late nineteenth century were largely about preparing ‘fallen women’ for marriage by focussing upon domestic training and household management, whilst reinstating ideals regarding appropriate sexual and feminine behaviour (Bartley 2000: 2). As Garratt’s article in the *English Review* from 1923 reveals, in the aftermath of the Great War renewed vigour was placed upon the importance of marriage, and specifically how in marriage the individual and societal body could find solace after the upheaval of war. Even before the war had drawn to a close, post-war reconstruction marriage was prophesised to be contingent upon marriage by writers such as Stopes who argued that “the only secure basis for a present-day State is the welding of its units in marriage” (Stopes 1918: 4). In part, the promotion of marriage was a response to the cultural impact the war was seen to have upon the traditional parameters of gender – particularly women’s partial emancipation and temporary employment gains – and as such formed a component within the broader campaigns for tradition and the premium placed upon domesticity as the sight from which reconstruction was most likely to succeed. It was also a response to the demographic impact of the war, given that the scale of human loss was believed to have created a generation of ‘surplus women’ deprived of the chance to marry their partners and the opportunity to meet potential husbands. Commentators were also mobilised by anxieties that marriage rates had been in decline over the course of the early twentieth century, and that, totalled with the changes brought about by war, marriage was an institution in crisis by the interwar period. Yet, as much as marriage was utilised by advocates of tradition, one of the ways in which the promotion of marriage manifested itself during this time was in the circulation of new ideas about

heterosexual intimacy. For the first time marriage advice literature and manuals were marketed for the mass audience, whilst the popularity of the romantic and ‘sex’ novel from publishing houses such as Mills and Boon flourished. An apt indication of the success of such literature can be found in the sale figures of Stopes’ *Married Love*. Published in March 1918, it sold over 2,000 copies in the first fortnight alone, with sales reaching over 300,000 by 1924 (Weeks 1981: 72). Ideas about emotional mutuality and sexual companionship between spouses revolutionised the way marriage was conceptualised and the candidness with which it was discussed. With an element of pseudo-sexology, books such as *Married Love*, advocated a “vigorous and harmonious sex life”, within - of course - the bounds of marriage (Stopes 1918: 72; Giddens 1992; Collins 2003; Hall 1998). Thus, whilst the message of sexual intimacy was distinctly modern the parameters of these ideas remained positively traditional. Located within these discourses, the prostitute presented somewhat of an anomaly. If in this climate marriage was posited as synonymous to social reconstruction and moral restoration, then on the same note the prostitute as an ‘unmarried woman’ was understood to be synonymous to social destruction and moral corruption. Moreover, as the amateur prostitute came to dominate narratives of interwar prostitution, the fear now was that not only were a small cohort of hardened professionals undermining hegemonic ideals of appropriate femininity, but women drawn from broader social backgrounds into amateur prostitution were engaging in pre-marital sex, delaying marriage, and in doing so offering men a much more alluring temptation away from, or alternative to, marriage than the professional ever did. This section illuminates the relationship statuses and experiences of my dataset whilst contextualising this information against the broader relationship trends in Liverpool and against some of the dominant historical and scholarly understandings about the relationship between marriage – or indeed singleness – and prostitution. In doing so, a much more nuanced picture of marriage and prostitution emerges, and one which advocates listening to individual experiences rather than making broad assumptions and/or casting stereotypes.

#### (8:4) The dataset as single women

Of the 27 prostitutes surveyed, 14 (or 52%) were single – or at least had not been married – at the point at which they first incurred a conviction as a prostitute. It does not translate, however, that the unmarried cohort were necessarily single women. They may well have formed significant

relationships that to all intents and purposes resembled marriages but because of the census restrictions associated with the research period it is impossible to identify instances where women co-habited with partners but did not marry. Nevertheless, even if just over half the dataset were definitely single, this proportion is still relatively low when contextualised against both historical estimations and scholarly research which has typically shown prostitution to be a trade engaged in overwhelmingly by single women. For example, in her profiling of registered prostitutes in late nineteenth century Plymouth and Southampton, Walkowitz determined that the “picture that emerges closely resembles that of Victorian prostitutes in other urban areas”, whereby these prostitutes were “young single women” (Walkowitz 1980: 193). Using the information detailed in the 1911 census in relation to the statuses of the prostitute women in residence at the LFP, it is possible to gauge that 95% of inmates were listed as single. Of course, this figure may say more about the type of prostitute women such institutions targeted and admitted rather than being a representation of the broader prostitute population. By the interwar period, conceptualisations of the prostitute as single still very much dominated, with the League of Nations finding in their case study of 224 British prostitutes in the early thirties that “most of the women are unmarried” (TNA PCOM/9/141/1931-39). That only 52% of the dataset were single (or not previously married) at the point in which they embarked upon prostitution infers that the composition of prostitutes in interwar Liverpool had both altered from the Victorian period and departed from the national picture in interwar Britain more broadly. Indeed, in her study of female offenders in late nineteenth century Stafford, Turner also found that a comparatively low proportion of her dataset – 40% - were not “in a significant relationship when they first offended” (Turner 2009: 212). By the point at which prostitutes in my dataset departed from the CJS, the number of single (or unmarried) women had declined from 14 to 11. Therefore, 3 women had married during their offending careers as prostitutes, cases I shall explore in the following section regarding married prostitutes. The figures suggest that the single cohort then largely left prostitution also as single women, although again as I examine in the following section in some cases their departure from prostitution may well have been motivated by the formation of relationships as demonstrable through marriages which presently followed women’s departure from prostitution.

Arguably, however, the most interesting data regarding prostitutes as single women is that in relation to the experiences of the dataset after their departure from prostitution and over the course of their lives. Of the 27 prostitutes surveyed only 5 women never married at all. Firstly, this suggests that a woman's involvement in prostitution did not impinge upon her long-term eligibility as a spouse, with 9 out of the 14 original singletons going on to ultimately marry (3 during their offending careers and 6 after they had left the CJS). Walkowitz has argued that the regulation of prostitutes under the C.D. Acts in Southampton and Plymouth led to the "making of an outcast group" whereby amongst other problems such as isolation from families and ostracism from communities (points I will pick up in due course), prostitutes were unable to form sustainable relationships (see Walkowitz 1980). Similarly, as we have seen previously, the LWPP believed that a woman's contact with the CJS – being arrested, appearing in court, and receiving a pecuniary, penal and/or probationary punishment – left her susceptible to "social displacement" whereby she became isolated and/or ostracised from her family and community (TNA HO 326/8/56./1927-28). Legal interventions in interwar Liverpool, it would seem, did little by way of impacting upon prostitutes' ability to go on to share in hegemonic heterosexual institutions such as marriage.

Secondly, the low level of prostitutes who remained unmarried throughout their lives implies that the disproportionate ratio of women to men in interwar Liverpool – or 'surplus women' as they were popularly referred to - did not constrict women's chances of marrying.

Table 5 'Sex-Ratio at Different Ages, 1931' (Jones 1934: 75).

Age at last Birthday	Number of Females to 100 Males	
	Liverpool	England and Wales*
0-4	99	98
5-13	100	98
14-20	108	99
21-44	116	112
45-64	114	115

65+	139	130
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\*Based on Registrar-General's mid-year estimate of population

The overwhelming feature in relation to the proportion of females to males in interwar Liverpool was that in every age cohort apart from the two youngest ranges (0-4 and 5-13) the number of women far exceeded the number of men. In particular, between the ages of 21 and 44 there were 116 females for every 100 males. Compared with the national figures, the proportion of women to men was greater in Liverpool than the country as a whole in all age groups apart from the 45 to 64 range. Whilst there was certainly a 'surplus' female population, as the following section on marriage explores this apparently had little impact upon the dataset's experiences of marriage.

It is, of course, difficult to determine how exactly prostitutes status' as single women impacted upon their choice (or lack of alternative choices) to enter prostitution, although the forthcoming section on the economy of interwar Liverpool looks more closely at the specific employment difficulties facing single women. Nevertheless, the evidence does suggest that for some women prostitution represented a temporary stage in their lives connected to their pre-marital status. Indeed, this is a theory supported by the fact that the average age of the single woman offending as a prostitute was 24 years old, a figure considerably younger than that of the dataset as a whole. For those women who remained unmarried throughout the duration of their lives, it would appear that either there was a relationship between how often they engaged in prostitution as a result of their status, or that their permanent status as single was connected to their high rates of offending as prostitutes. Whilst the five remaining single women represented just 18.5% of the sampled cohort together they accounted for 24.5% of the offences committed by the total dataset across the research period. Although it is far easier to establish the relationship statuses of the datasets than determining the relationship these statuses had to their offending experiences as prostitutes, one story does demonstrate how being single could leave you either susceptible or prone to prostitution (depending upon which way it is read). On March 17<sup>th</sup> 1926, a 22 year-old woman named Charlotte Houston was arrested for "assisting in the management of a brothel" at 55 Mount Pleasant. The person arrested for managing the brothel was 47 year-old Mary Houston, Charlotte's mother. Charlotte was the middle of three children, with an elder brother and a younger sister. Evidently, 55

Mount Pleasant was the family home, although by 1926 with the father dead and the brother and sister married, only Mary and Charlotte lived at the residence. Just a year earlier, Charlotte's sister had married and presumably set up home with her new husband. Whilst, of course, we can never establish why 55 Mount Pleasant was used for the purpose of prostitution, how often (although there was only one arrest recorded across the research period for either of these women), or whether mother and daughter were in agreement about what went on, it would seem that in comparison to her younger sister who had married and left the family home, Charlotte was more vulnerable to prostitution because of her unmarried status regardless of whether personal inclination underpinned her involvement or her mother's demands.

(8:5) The dataset as married women

Of the 27 prostitutes surveyed, 11 women had experienced marriage at the onset of their offending or at the onset of the research period. Again, it is difficult to assert with confidence that these 11 women necessarily lived as married women, particularly given the issues surrounding census availability and the fact that divorce remained at this time an expensive process typically only embarked upon by the upper classes. In fact, it is highly possible that 4 of the 'married' cohort were actually living apart from their spouses (see following section on separation, widowhood and desertion). Nevertheless, the number of women who had been or were married before their offending careers began is both significant and clearly at odds with the conceptualisation of the prostitute as single. By the end of their offending careers or the end of the research period, it is probable that 10 of the women were living as married women. As stated above, 3 women had married during the course of their offending careers as prostitutes. For example, in February 1926 Violet Williams was arrested as an 'unknown woman' soliciting in Lime Street. Two years later in August 1928, she was arrested for assisting in the running of a brothel at 11 Lord Nelson Street, a charge which was later dismissed. In early 1932, at the age of 25 Violet married in Liverpool, and for a few years seems to have disappeared from the registers until in February 1936 she was arrested as a common prostitute for loitering and importuning in St Johns Lane. In the case of Violet, it would appear that her newly acquired marital status did not lead to her complete desistance from prostitution. Of the other two women who married during their offending spans, 1 had become a widow by the time she left the CJS and the other had had been abandoned. A further

two women who had been married at the start of their offending were also seemingly separated by the time they stopped offending (again see following section). Six women went on to marry for the first time after they stopped offending, whilst four who had previously experienced marriage went on to remarry. This meant that in total, 22 of the 27 women surveyed had experienced marriage at some point over the course of their lives, and thus it would appear that largely prostitutes did marry and that associations between prostitution and singleness and/or the spinster may indeed be inflated.

If, as the experiences of my dataset suggest, prostitute women in interwar Liverpool were on the whole not rejecting marriage, then is it the case that they were delaying it? The average age of first marriage has been calculated at 25 years. This figure seems to corroborate with broader estimations of average marital age in both the national and local context. The results from Jones' study below indicate that typically women in Liverpool married younger than their male counterparts, with 26.2% of females between the age of 20 and 24 being married compared to just 12.8% of men. This suggests that prostitute women in Liverpool were not delaying their marriages when contextualised against a broader sampled population from the city.

Table 6 'Marital State and Age of Sampled Population (Liverpool Household Survey, 1919-1930)' (Jones 1934: 82).

Age	Per cent. of Males				Per cent. of Females			
	Single	Married	Widowed, etc.	Deserted	Single	Married	Widowed, etc.	Deserted
14-19	99.7	0.3	0		98.8	1.2	0	
20-24	87.2	12.8	0		73.3	26.2	0.5	
25-44	22.9	75.9	1.1		21.7	72.3	5.9	
45-64	10.2	82.8	7.1		8.9	66.3	24.7	
65+	9.8	61.5	28.7		9.8	29.2	61.0	

Interestingly, men comprised a higher proportion of the married population within the 25 to 44 age range, although this seems to be the consequence of a greater percentage of women being

widowed or deserted by this stage in life, as oppose to there being more single women. This is a trend which is repeated and magnified with age, with the cohort over 65 showing that just 29.2% women were married compared with 61.5% of men, and 61% of females having been widowed or deserted compared with just 28.7% of men in this category, whereas both sexes had the same proportion of singletons with 9.8%. It would appear, then, the fact that the sex-ratio in Liverpool meant that there were considerably more women than men in every group of marriageable age did not necessarily have a negative bearing on women's chances of marrying. Indeed, the proportion of single women was consistently less than that of single men after the age of 19. Although, whether this sex-ratio went on to impact upon the chances of the married woman being deserted is another matter, and one which unfortunately cannot be quantified.

Whilst it is evident that statistically the dataset's experiences of marriage were fairly consistent with the marital experiences of the broader female population, the task now is to delve further into these individual stories to see in what way, if any, marriage impacted upon a woman's offending experiences. Of course, there is a danger that in constructing retrospective associations between a woman's marital situation and her entrance into, desistance from, or persistence in prostitution we are actually making crude assumptions rather than establishing facts, and that these 'links' may represent nothing more than coincidences. Bearing these interpretative issues in mind, the following stories seek to highlight potential rather than solid patterns and thus I resist determining the statistical occurrence of such trends. Instead, attention is placed upon contextualising these personal encounters within broader historical and scholarly narratives concerning the relationship between marriage and prostitution.

Perhaps unsurprisingly given the historical preoccupation with prostitution as a threat to the institution of marriage, contemporaries rarely gave much thought to the idea that marriage could result in a woman's desistance from prostitution. Early twentieth century investigations, such as *DP*, were primarily concerned with understanding the "making of the prostitute," establishing the factors which lead to her 'downfall' and thus carving out methods and policies of prevention (Royden ed., 1916: 17). In this climate where prevention took precedence over reform, there was



little impetus for focussing upon those women who rose out of prostitution “to the solid respectability of a good marriage” (ibid: 17). Equally, it was virtually impossible for social investigators to trace let alone engage with such women who had left a life of prostitution behind following marriage, given that presumably this was a part of their lives they wanted to leave behind and perhaps now, rather ironically, these women understood their past involvement in prostitution as a threat to the marriages they had entered into. Historians have tended to give this theory much more attention, with, for example, White contending that prostitution represented a brief stage in a woman’s life “whereby after a few years the woman would settle down and get married” (quoted in Slater 2007: 140). In light of the number of women from my dataset who were already married at the onset of their offending, this theory is somewhat questionable, but nevertheless it does seem to hold weight in a small number of cases. For example, Doris Blevin married in the Spring of 1927, approximately a year after she last appeared in the registers charged with “wandering and behaving in an indecent manner by having carnal connection” in Lyncot Road. For this offence, Blevin received 1 month imprisonment with hard labour. Her offending history shows that between 1918 and 1926 she had been steadily but persistently offending incurring six arrests in total for prostitution. In the case of Blevin it would seem that there was a strong link between her marriage and her desistance from prostitution, and possibly that her cessation of offending in the year leading up to her marriage represented the courting period with her future husband. Similarly, Rose Martindale had received four prostitution-related convictions between February 1926 and March 1928, in the Autumn of 1928 she married, and disappeared from the registers completely. But, perhaps the most interesting case in this respect is that of Lena Barrington a prolific offender. Between January 1920 and September 1930, Lena had accrued no less than 25 convictions for prostitution offences, at some stages appearing in court on a monthly basis. In early 1930 Lena marries in Liverpool, and from this point her prostitution appears to stop altogether, although of course there is the inherent interpretative problem involved in deciphering desistance from crime in that not appearing in the registers does not necessarily mean stopped offending altogether. Interestingly, throughout her whole offending career Lena had always given her surname as that of the man who she went on to marry in 1931, which in turn raises a series of further questions. Was she living as a common law wife? Was he involved in her offending or at least aware of it? And,

did her marriage mark her reason from leaving the registers at this moment? Again, these are questions that are impossible to answer, but certainly worth bearing in mind.

As the experiences of the dataset have shown, a high proportion – 41 per cent - of the women sampled were in fact married (or had experienced marriage) before they began offending as prostitutes. Although the authors of *DP* failed to consider the role marriage played in a woman's desistance from prostitution they did, interestingly, consider the ways in which marriage may have been a causation of prostitution. This was an extremely enlightened line of enquiry, given that as outlined above, prostitution was consistently constructed as a challenge to marriage. Indeed, the arguments and accompanying case studies forwarded in *DP* are very compelling. They stated how marriage often "leaves the woman in a worse economic position than before marriage" (Royden ed., 1916: 118). As I explore in the upcoming section on the economic landscape of interwar Liverpool, married women had their own specific economic challenges to negotiate. Typically they were responsible for more dependants than their single counterparts, they were expected to be the financial managers of the household, and, as many women dropped out of the formal labour market at the point of marriage they were particularly dependent upon the employment situation of their husbands. Thus, although marriage brought greater chances of financial stability it also brought with it more financial pressures and strains, and catastrophic outcomes if times were bad. The following cases taken from *DP* labour these points:

"Mrs. I. S. was found on the streets. Her husband was out of work, and they were in debt for the rent, and on the borders of starvation. So she became desperate and went on the streets to earn money for her husband and new-born baby" (ibid: 119).

"A man was dying of consumption; he and his wife were a devoted couple. The young woman went to work during the day, and supplemented her earnings by going out on the streets at night, and thus managed to get enough to keep her husband alive" (ibid: 119).

Again, it is difficult to know if and in what way the married women from my dataset relationship status impacted upon their decisions to enter prostitution, but in some cases there does appear to be a link. For example, Ivy Towey married in the summer of 1921, and by the February of 1922 she appeared in the registers for the first time. She went on to commit a further 12 prostitution offences up until November 1930. Why Ivy's offending began shortly after her

marriage is unclear. It is possible that she was deserted or separated from her husband (they never had any children), but it is equally as possible that Ivy was supplementing the household income in times of economic hardship. It is also feasible that her husband may have prompted or procured her into a life of prostitution, which represented another way in which marriage could be conducive to a woman's entry into prostitution.

Just as the Houston case highlighted the fact that prostitution could be a family endeavour, there are instances from the dataset where spouses appear to have been working together. For example, in August 1929, Jessie Maud Fitzwilliam was arrested for keeping a brothel at 2 Maryland Street and her husband Henry was arrested for assisting in the said brothel. The couple had been married for 21 years, and by the time of their arrests Jessie was 48 years old and Henry was 51. Together, they had led a fairly bohemian lifestyle across England and Wales. At the time of the 1911 census, they were living in Wrexham and Henry was listed as an actor. They had five boarders living with them, one of whom was also listed as an actor, one as a scenic artist and another as a chauffeur.

Another interesting point which arises amongst the married cohort is the frequency with which they appeared within the court registers under their maiden names. For example, Florence Bache was married in 1913, but from her first recorded conviction in February 1918 to her last in January 1928 she consistently uses her maiden rather than marital name. This pattern was repeated in the cases of at least three other of the women from the dataset. Presumably for some women this represented a tactic of self-preservation, a means through which they were able to detach their professional life from their personal, retain some semblance of agency and dignity, and avoid feelings of shame. In this sense, it would appear that Liverpool's prostitutes were not necessarily comfortable with their engagement in prostitution, and that it was for them a way of maintaining their marriages and families rather than undermining, rejecting or challenging them.

#### (8:6) Widowhood, separation and desertion in the dataset

Only one woman from the dataset entered prostitution as a widow. Alike to their single counterparts, the widow had to negotiate the economic landscape alone. Unlike their single counterparts, the employment opportunities of the widow were frequently limited by her advanced

age, a point I pick up later in the section on Liverpool's economy. In fact, whilst narratives of economic necessity as a cause of prostitution were largely mute at this time, the figure of the widow was often seen as an exception to this rule. For example, Mrs. Bramwell Booth of the Salvation Army commented that, "so far as economic necessity is a direct cause of prostitution it is so mainly among widows" (Royden ed., 1916: 118). It is possible then, that at the age of 47 and widowed, Mary Houston engaged in prostitution as a response to the limited alternative choices available to her. Another woman, Dora Ulring, was widowed during the course of her offending. Interestingly, Dora engaged in prostitution at all three of the relationship stages she experienced over the course of her life; as a single woman, as a married woman, and as a widow. The death of her sailor husband at sea in 1926 appears to have had little impact upon both her engagement in prostitution and offending rates. Indeed, this may well have been connected to her status since her marriage in 1918 as a sailor's wife. Nurses working in the treatment of venereal disease, for example, commented how in seaport towns "wives of sailors often resort to prostitution as a temporary help when their husbands are away on voyages" (ibid: 117). Once again then, we are directed to the notion that marriage did not necessarily mean that women lived entirely as married women nor that they were necessarily in receipt of financial security. For Dora, perhaps, her life as a widow may not have been that different from her life as a married woman.

As previously indicated, a number of married women from the dataset appeared to have experienced some form of separation. In some cases, it is probable that separation occurred following desertion. For example, on 12<sup>th</sup> April 1928, Maud Jasinski was arrested as 'unknown woman soliciting' in St. Georges Place. Exactly a week later, her husband Jan Jasinski a Polish national whom she had married in 1926 at the age of 20 was listed on the passenger ship 'Regina' bound for Quebec. The information relating to Jan on the passenger list is extremely illuminating. In the column labelled 'Do you intend to reside permanently in Canada' Jan has stated 'Yes'. In the column which asked passengers to provide the name and relationship of their nearest relative, Jan marked "Wife". However, the name he provided for his wife was not Maud but a Janina Jasinski, who was currently living in Poland. It is unclear from the passenger records how long Jan was resident in Liverpool before he set off for Canada or if his Polish wife came to join him at a later date. What is quite conclusive is that he never returned to Britain. This was Maud's only

prostitution-related offence, and thus it is possible that her actions on the 12<sup>th</sup> April were motivated by her personal upset at separating from her husband and his imminent departure to Canada. In 1935 Maud remarried and appears to have had a fairly typical martial life going on to have four children. The story of Catherine Garrity is quite unique because it seems that she experienced two episodes of desertion. In early 1918 Catherine married an American sailor (of Dutch heritage) Gus Kairath who had been drafted into the US Navy in 1916. From the shipping records it is possible to establish that from the onset of his naval career up until 1918 Gus docked in Liverpool on a regular basis. In the June of 1918, Catherine gave birth to a daughter. Therefore, Catherine must have been pregnant at the time of her wedding a few months previously, and it seems highly likely that this was something of a ‘shotgun’ marriage. But when Catherine gave birth her husband was not in the country, in fact, he never returned to Britain again. On 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1918 Gus is listed as arriving in New York on the ship *Pannonia*, and the shipping records indicate that he made no further voyages either as a sailor or a passenger outside of America again. Yet, even though Catherine was left deserted with a newborn child back in Liverpool, it was not until the November of 1922 that her offending career seems to have taken off, interestingly around the same time she remarried. In late 1922 Catherine married a Paul Tammemagi, but there are no further records of this man, they do not have any children and it would seem likely that this marriage also broke down when Paul (who was probably a foreign national) left the country. Catherine never remarried, and between 1922 and 1934 she was convicted of four prostitution offences.

The desertion narrative is interesting for a number of reasons, not least because it positions prostitution as the upshot of women having been failed by marriage as oppose to women failing or rejecting marriage as a consequence of their involvement in prostitution. The emotional and economic strains associated with desertion were frequently identified by the participants of the *DP* survey as the leading motivation for their prostitution, strains which were intensified when a child or children were involved in the equation:

“D.M. was a respectable and intelligent married woman. Her husband deserted her soon after the birth of her first child, and she lived with her grandmother, and supported herself and her child by daily work. When twenty-one she was unable to get work, and so she went on the streets to earn money. She subsequently had two more children” (ibid: 119).

There is a danger that by focussing too much upon the idea of desertion the prostitute is constructed as a powerless victim of male actions. Thus, it is probably more appropriate to talk about such experiences as examples of separation. Even in the most emotive of situations, such as those outlined above, it is feasible that the breakdown of marriage resulted from the wishes and/or actions of both parties involved, or even just the woman's. The point is that we do not and cannot know why separation took place, we are unable to know when exactly it took place (in most cases), and how such incidences actually impacted upon a woman's involvement in prostitution. It is wise, therefore, to veer on the side of caution.

#### (8:7) Motherhood and prostitution

The prostitute woman as a mother presented another interesting conundrum for interwar commentators. Discussions broadly fell into two paradigms. On the one hand, set amidst anxieties regarding a declining birth-rate (amongst the middle classes mainly) and the premium post-war reconstruction placed upon the domestic sphere, as Kingsley Kent has argued, there was at this time a "new accent on motherhood" (Kingsley Kent 1990: 72). Thus, the prostitute was frequently constructed as problematic because of her apparent resistance and/or delaying of motherhood, a point of contention aggravated by the fact that amateur prostitution was seen to now be drawing in a broader remit of women from all social classes. The deluge of literature emerging on this topic - such as Cowdroy's *Wasted Womanhood* (1923), and Ayling's *The Retreat from Parenthood* (1930) - was a testament to how pronounced such concerns were and an indicator of how 'new feminism' was increasingly framed in the language of the domestic, positioning women's 'natural' role as that of wife and mother and in doing so surrendering the anticipations of the earlier 'equality feminists'. So, for example, Cowdroy argued how:

"Women in this country won freedom from the domination of man only to make herself a slave to the masculine in her own nature. In her endeavour to equal man of the physical and mental planes she subjugated her womanhood. She has used for her own ends the vitality Nature gave her for her children. And her sons today, robbed of their birthright, are emasculate and devitalised" (Cowdroy 1923: 75).

Set against the backdrop of post-war reconstruction, the body of the individual assumed a symbiotic relationship to the societal body in the pursuit of regeneration. To paraphrase

Walkowitz's observations of this dynamic in the Victorian context, the "core, private identity" of the prostitute could also be "something publicly dangerous" (Walkowitz 1989: 126). More specifically, as Humphries has noted of interwar discourses of the amateur, her actions were frequently understood "to be putting the very future of the British race at risk" (Humphries 1988: 87).

Yet, if the woman who rejected motherhood for the purpose of prostitution was conceptualised as 'publically dangerous', then the prostitute woman who did embrace motherhood could be seen to be equally, if not more, detrimental to the 'future of the British race.' As discussed in chapter four, a resurgence in eugenic theorising during the early twentieth century meant that for many commentators this emphasis upon motherhood was not just about seeking to replenish the population in terms of numbers but was about replenishing the 'quality' of the population. As Bland has observed, "women and girls were being enjoined to plan for rational, responsible and healthy motherhood; women were seen as having a duty to fulfil their role as 'guardians of the race'" (Bland 1982: 373).

#### (8:8) The dataset as childless women

Whilst the relationship experiences of the dataset were fairly consistent with the broader female population in interwar Liverpool and Britain – particularly in terms of the proportion who engaged in marriage and the average age at which they did so – their experiences of motherhood paints a rather different picture. In total, 15 of the 27 surveyed had children, whilst the remaining 12 women did not. This suggests that prostitution acted as a greater barrier to motherhood than it did to marriage. Although, whether this represented an informed choice on the part of these women not to have children irrespective of their involvement in prostitution, whether they rejected motherhood in favour of prostitution, or whether their status as prostitutes restricted their eligibility and/or attractiveness as potential mothers, or a combination of these factors, is unclear. Whilst 9 of the 12 childless prostitutes had experienced marriage, it is feasible that the nature and/or route of these marriages impacted upon their reasons for not having children. For example, in the case of Ethel Koybashi whereby her husband appears to have returned to his native country of Japan within weeks of their marriage, there is probably a strong link between her experience of separation and/or

abandonment and her experience of childlessness. It is likely that 5 out of the 9 married women without children were separated from their spouses fairly soon after marriage. In this sense, marriage did not automatically result in either relationship security or motherhood. It would also appear that there is a correlation between the status of this cohort as non-mothers and the rates and spans of their offending careers. Whilst this cohort represented 44% of the dataset they accounted for 68% of the total offences committed, with on average a childless prostitute committing 8.5 offences over their offending career compared to a prostitute who had a child/children who committed on average 4.8 offences. Indeed, 5 out of the 6 prostitutes from the dataset who committed over 10 offences were from the childless cohort. In terms of offending spans, on average a prostitute who did not have children offended for a period of 7.5 years on average whereas a prostitute with children offended for 4.5 years.

#### (8:9) The dataset as mothers

Together, the 15 women from the dataset who were mothers had a total of 36 children, an average of 2.4 per woman. Two of the women, Doris Alley and Florence Bache, had five children each, whilst a high proportion of the dataset – 6 women – had just one child. The average age of the cohort at the point of their first child was 26 years old. At the onset of their offending, 9 out of the 15 women were already mothers, whilst the remaining 6 went on to have children after they had stopped offending. Of the 9 who were mothers before their engagement in prostitution, 2 of these – Doris Alley and Florence Bache – had further children during the course of their careers as prostitutes, with Alley going on to have 2 more children after she departed from the registers. Again, caution must be levelled so as not to make crude assumptions about the relationship between these women's experiences of motherhood and their status' as prostitutes. Thus, this section together with the content of the chapter more broadly is concerned with exploring some of the specific economic and emotional pressures these women may have had to negotiate as mothers, and which may in turn have led to their entrance into or desistance from prostitution.

Whilst by the early twentieth century many of the emotional risks involved in motherhood had been considerably reduced – with a decline in both infant mortality rates and childbearing related deaths – the associated economic pressures of child rearing continued to challenge working-class



mothers and families. Tighter restrictions on child labour combined with a raise in compulsory education to the age of 14 under The Fisher Act of 1918 to extend both the costs and duration of child rearing. As Brookes has contended, there had been a shift in attitudes by the early twentieth century whereby raising children was now likely to be viewed as “more of an economic liability than an asset” (Brookes 1986: 96). Given that contemporaries rarely focussed upon the economics of prostitution perhaps it is hardly surprising that the relationship between motherhood and prostitution was typically understood in terms of the latter being a threat to the former as oppose to motherhood representing a driver for prostitution. Certainly, the fact that 9 out of the 15 mothers from the complete dataset of 27 women had already experienced motherhood prior to engaging in prostitution suggests that for some women prostitution probably offered a way of sustaining their families rather than undermining them. And, of course, these economic pressures were accentuated in cases where mothers had to negotiate the economic landscape alone. Of the 15 women from the dataset who experienced motherhood, 4 had children out of wedlock whilst at least another 4 were likely to have lived as separated women with dependent children. As the authors of *DP* noted, mothers of illegitimate children not only had “to bear the whole economic burden of the child” but had to endure “a certain contempt as one who has given herself incautiously or has failed to give satisfaction as a mate and get power over her man” (Royden ed., 1916: 84-85). Based upon the fact that only 2.2% of their sample accredited the original causation of their ‘downfall’ to the fact that they were unmarried with a ‘child to keep’, *DP* concluded that “illegitimate motherhood will rarely lead to prostitution” (ibid: 85). The experiences of my dataset largely concur with this stance, with prostitution typically having already been engaged in prior to bearing an illegitimate child, and indeed may have been the upshot of their engagement.

Another factor which was gaining currency at this time amongst social and welfare workers as a powerful procurer of prostitution was that concerning the emotional shock connected to the death of a child. In *DP* various case-studies highlighted a strong correlation between the “period of despair and loneliness following the loss of her child” and the woman’s entrance into prostitution (ibid: 85). *DP* also claimed that many of the bodies who came into contact with prostitutes had increasingly informed them of a semi or sub-conscious desire amongst prostitutes who had

experienced such a loss to “seek occasion to become a mother again” (ibid: 94). This theory, it would appear, signalled an example of what Donzelot has termed the “tutelary complex,” whereby during this period “the new profession of social work employed a psychiatric, sociological, and psychoanalytical knowledge for support and aimed to replace stigmatising punishment with a careful consideration given to each individual’s case” (Valier 1998: 2). Indeed, a high proportion of the dataset – 6 out of the 15 who were mothers – had experienced the death of a child, with two women losing more than one child. However, in only one case does there appear to be a strong correlation between a woman’s involvement in prostitution (specifically her entrance) and the death of a child. In 1924 Winifred Lindop, aged 21, gave birth to an illegitimate child. Sadly, in June 1925 her baby died. Just six months later in January 1926 Winifred appeared in the registers for the first time when she was arrested as a common prostitute soliciting in Lime Street (although it is feasible that she had offended prior to this particularly given that she was dealt with as a common prostitute rather than as an unknown woman soliciting). For this offence she was discharged under the P.O.A. to a probation officer for a period of 12 months. Six weeks later Winifred was arrested for the same offence, again in Lime Street, but this time the adjudication read as follows; ‘committed to the Poor Law Certified Institution, Hoole Lane, Chester.’ Interestingly, by September 1926 Winifred had given birth to another child back in Liverpool. It is possible that she was referred to the workhouse – an extremely rare outcome in prostitution cases – because of her pregnant status. It is also possible that the combination of emotional and economic pressures had spurred her into prostitution at this time, and that her second pregnancy was the result of this engagement.

#### (8:10) The economy of interwar Liverpool

This section considers the economic landscape of interwar Liverpool. Over the course of this investigation it has transpired that contemporary representations of, and responses to, prostitution were rarely framed with the question of economics in mind. Instead, in both the national and local context, commentators and regulators alike typically talked about ‘motivation’ in terms of individual greed as oppose to need, and focussed upon personal pathology rather than addressing – or even acknowledging – the problem of structural feminine poverty. Where associations between

poverty and prostitution were considered, they were frequently refuted and/or seized upon to further accentuate rather than alleviate the perceived deviancy of prostitutes. So, for example, in 1932 – the year widely regarded to be the worst of depression in Liverpool – Hall argued that “as a direct cause of prostitution poverty appears to be a diminishing factor” (Hall 1932: 111). Interestingly, many of Hall’s conclusions were based upon her experiences within Liverpool, the city with which in her words “I am best acquainted” (ibid: 121). And, in 1937 the LWPP noted how, “it is unfortunate that in the present economic conditions, the small amount of money a girl can contribute to the family budget, seems to rank higher than her future welfare” (LRO H364/5/WOM/1937). In the LCPF’s annual reports from the thirties, no mention was made of the relationship between the economic situation and prostitution; in fact no mention was made of prostitution at all during the decade. It is reasonable to assume that the LCPF regarded the declining criminal statistical returns for prostitution as sufficient ‘evidence’ that the depression was having no negative bearing upon prostitution rates. However, as Slater has observed, it is difficult for historians to gauge the impact of the depression upon prostitution rates as it coincided with the increasing tendency for police inertia following the series of high-profile scandals which highlighted over-zealous policing in the late twenties (Slater 2007a: 135). In Liverpool, this process is further complicated given that, as we have seen, a culture of concealment emerged from the early thirties whereby prostitutes were increasingly dealt with under alternative public disorder legislation (i.e. as drunks and/or as unknown women soliciting), whilst a perceived move towards the ‘professionalization’ of prostitution meant that constables typically ‘moved on’ prostitutes rather than using recourse to the law. Although over the course of this investigation evidence has been periodically presented which serves to challenge the validity of the declining statistics – or at least the rate of decline – it is difficult, if not impossible, because of the said ‘invalidity’ of the statistical data to know how far and in what ways the economic climate shaped prostitution cultures and/or influenced women’s participation in it. Whilst it may be surmised, for example, that the higher number of women legislated under the LCA in the thirties as oppose to the VA and/or TPCA may well reflect a growing tendency for part-time and casual prostitution as a ephemeral response to the economic situation, such observations are diluted by the fact that the overall trend was one of considerable and continual decline compared to the figures from the early and mid

twenties. Additionally, methodological issues surrounding the availability of census data means that it has only been possible to locate the employment histories of a small proportion (30%) of the dataset, and invariably such information pertains to the older women within this cohort and their employment experiences before the research period.

Bearing in mind these potential pitfalls and issues of interpretation, this section nevertheless proceeds to illuminate the economic landscape of interwar Liverpool. Whilst the depression of the thirties served to aggravate the economic situation, it is argued that Liverpool's female labour market had historically been precarious. By examining the main areas of female employment, it is shown how structural problems relating to a lack of economic diversity both restricted women's opportunities and left the female labour market predisposed to broader economic trends. Furthermore, reliance upon casual and seasonal employment (which in part emerged as a response to the limited female employment opportunities) cultivated a cyclical effect whereby short-term unemployment was at once an acute and habitual problem which arose from this culture and also the path through which to remedy it. In light of the information presented earlier in chapter seven concerning prostitute ages and the data previously charted in this chapter regarding the relationship statuses of the dataset, an extended dialogue is constructed in order to understand how these factors shaped women's employment opportunities and in identifying sections of the female population who were particularly vulnerable to experiences of economic instability. This section also considers the course of the male labour market, with the view that focussing exclusively upon the sexual division of labour negates the economic and emotional transactions between the sexes whether it is as husband and wife, father and daughter, brother and sister, and so on. As Zemon Davis noted back in the early stages of feminist history, "we should be interested in the history of both women and men, that we should not be working only on the subjected sex any more than an historian of class can focus entirely on peasants" (Zemon Davis 1975: 90).

#### (8:11) The course of Liverpool's economy

Since the eighteenth century Liverpool's economy had been strongly dependent upon its status as a port city, with "a large proportion of the workforce (40-50%) ... in port-based casual occupations" at any given time up until the outbreak of World War Two (MSRG 1992: 92). The structural composition of its economy meant that more so than the other industrial centres of the north,

namely Manchester and Leeds, Liverpool was particularly susceptible to trends in the domestic and global markets. Almost two-thirds of insured workers were employed in the service industries by 1932 – chiefly in shipping, distribution and transportation – whereas manufacturing, in particular factory work – was distinctly underrepresented (ibid: 13; Brogden 1991: 3). It has been possible to trace the occupations of the prostitute's fathers in 22 out of 27 cases. This information roughly accords with the broader distribution of the male labour force, with a particular high representation in dock-based, transport and communications, and manual work. Two of the men were identified as carters, one was a telegraphist, two were mariners, one was a dock gateman, another a porter, and seven were labourers (including two painters, a packer and two bricklayers). Of the remaining eight men, five worked in areas which could best be described as skilled jobs and/or trades, including a watch repairer, an optician and a master tailor (with own business). The other three men were recorded as a newsagent, publican and Sergeant Major in the British Army. Perhaps of more significance is the employment data which has been gathered in relation to the husbands and/or partners of the sampled set, giving that it was invariably with these men (rather than their fathers) that the women had to negotiate the economic climate alongside. Of the seven men whose occupations are recorded (or at least traceable), two were mariners/sailors, one of whom in the U.S. Navy. Interestingly, in these two instances, the employment status refers to the interwar period itself as shipping and naval records have been used to identify these individuals. Two were employed in the railway sector, one as an engine stoker and the other as a foreman sheeter. One individual was recorded as a cooper (a barrel maker and repairer), and one was a watch maker. The final individual, the husband of Jessie Fitzwilliam, Henry – who was charged alongside Jessie in 1929 for assisting in the running of a brothel in Maryland Street – was recorded in 1911 as an actor. Thus, although the information pertaining to husband's occupations is fairly limited in scale, we can ascertain that approximately two-thirds of this group were employed in port-based and service industry jobs, a composition which reflected the broader male workforce. As we shall see, it was individuals working within these sectors who were worse hit by the global depression.

Up until the First World War, as Britain's second largest port – London being the largest – Liverpool had prospered greatly from its service focused organisation of labour, at a time when the Empire remained strong and colonial links spurred the nation's position as an export-based

economy. However, by the 1920s the impact of the Great War had placed great strain on the world export market. In the absence of the safeguard of any significant alternative economic activity, the City found itself paying a high price, marking the start of what many have seen as its shift from “commercial metropolis” to “unwanted mausoleum”, or from “world city” to “pariah city” (MSRG 1992: 13; Wilks-Heeg 2003: 36).

Thus, when the world market crashed at the close of the decade, Liverpool had already endured years of hardship, with Caradog Jones estimating in his Social Survey of Merseyside that during the 1920s “roughly one-third of its inhabitants had lived – that euphemism for surviving – below the contemporary poverty line” (Brogden 1991: 3). The global downturn of the 1930s served to aggravate the difficulties already facing the city’s economy, and at an individual level meant that the length of time out of work was extended whilst the chance of reemployment was reduced. At the crux of Liverpool’s problems was the impact alterations in world trade were having upon the already diminishing industry of commercial shipping. As countries began to adopt economically isolationist and protectionist positions as a means of navigating the global situation, world trade relations took a considerable beating. For Liverpool, the desiccated export market not only impacted upon the shipping sector, but had implications for the auxiliary industries of transport, distribution and commerce. The number of insured workers employed in transport between 1924 and 1932 declined by 21%, in commerce by 25%, in river and dock services by 33%, in railways by 39%, and in shipbuilding and repair by over 50% (MSRG 1992: 13). By 1932 – “the worst year of the depression” – unemployment peaked at 108,000, some 28% of the local population or almost one in three workers (ibid: 13). This translates as exactly double the national figure, with the statistics for unemployment in Britain from 1921 to 1939 at 14% (Constantine 1983: 27). Yet, whilst unemployment levels accelerated at this time, the problem of irregular work – and subsequently short-term unemployment – had traditionally beset a large proportion of Liverpool’s workforce. So, for example, sailors were typically employed by the voyage, Dockers taken on by the day or half day, and tailoresses and waitresses normally secured work for no longer than a season at a time (MSRG 1992: 18). Thus, as the Merseyside Social Research Group has pointed out, in 1932 a further 90,000 men and women in Liverpool “could only find work for a few days each week” (ibid: 18). In this sense, the depression served to exacerbate rather than instigate the

culture of precarious employment which underpinned the city's labour market and which left many of its citizens in a constant cycle of economic instability and uncertainty.

Liverpool has long been synonymous as a gateway for passengers migrating to the Americas, Europe and Australasia, as well as a landing stage for those emigrating from Africa, Ireland and Russia. Up until the interwar period, passenger trade had been a financially lucrative subsidiary to the commercial shipping of cargo goods. However, by the 1920s – and increasingly into the 1930s – not only had the number of people embarking on global seafaring relocations significantly plummeted, Liverpool was losing its foothold on what remained of this contracted market to other British ports. In particular, Southampton “with its convenient position relative to London and the Continent”, was seizing monopoly of approximately 1% of Liverpool's port trade (ibid: 14). At a time when Liverpool's economy was feeling the repercussions of the decline in international trading, to lose 1% of trade to other areas domestically was not only symbolically demoralising but truly devastating for those individuals who were already competing within an over-saturated employment pool to find work, and more importantly, to retain it. By 1931, “the overall volume of trade through Liverpool was only 42% of the 1924 figure”, whereas Southampton had managed to hang on to 72%, London 73%, and Liverpool's North-West neighbour Manchester, 48% (ibid: 14).

Of course, Liverpool was not the only area of Britain gripped by economic turmoil. The 1930s witnessed the publication of a vast body of fictional and non-fictional literature detailing the bleakness of everyday life when consumed by economic depression. For example, Wilkinson's 1938 publication, *The Town That Was Murdered*, chronicles how the North-Eastern town of Jarrow with its single industry economy – shipbuilding – became completely crippled by the knock-on effects of the slump in the global import and export markets, culminating in the infamous Jarrow marches (Wilkinson 1938). In the same year the charity, The Pilgrim Trust (hereafter PT), published *Men Without Work*, a study into the ways in which six British towns (Blackburn, Rhonda, Deptford, Liverpool, Leicester and Crook) were affected by the problem of unemployment (The PT 1938). However, it was arguably the literary classics set against the backdrop of the depression such as Greenwood's Salford based *Love on the Dole*, and Orwell's *The Road To Wigan*

*Pier*, which had the most pervasive and durable bearing upon their readerships, becoming emblematic of and conducive to the popular image of the decade as the ‘hungry thirties’.

(8: 12) The female labour market

As the MSRG has contended “the working class of the twenties and thirties was by no means a homogeneous group” (MSRG 1992: 92). By paying attention to the tropes of gender, age, relationship status and employment skills this section seeks to illuminate the nuances of female employment and unemployment experiences in Liverpool. In late 1937, the Unemployment Assistance Board launched an enquiry into the problem of female unemployment in Liverpool. Having been approached by the Ministry of Labour and the Central Advisory Committee for Women’s Work, both of whom were eager to recruit local women for their training schemes – the Homecraft Training and the Reconditioning Course respectively – the U.A.B set out to investigate the following:

- to ascertain the nature of the problems confronting the U.A.B. in the re-employment of unemployed women;
- to study more closely the means of meeting them;
- to find out how to improve or enhance the qualification of being “capable and available” which is a condition of eligibility for unemployment allowances;
- to stimulate individual effort in finding employment.

The U.A.B. interviewed 1,000 women considered to be potential candidates for the eight week Reconditioning Course located – crucially – outside of Liverpool (PT 1938:247). The purpose of this programme was to give trainees:

“a complete change of surroundings and of company, good food and the discipline of some simple domestic studies, with a view primarily to reconditioning them so that they could return to their own type of employment, and secondarily to fitting them for residential or non-residential domestic service” (ibid: 247).

Tinged with a sense of contempt for the very women who such organisations existed to assist and protect, as well as their habitats and associates, the objectives of this scheme reverberates a prevailing sentiment of the era; domesticity was the key to achieving the feminine ideal, and more importantly the means through which to rid the ‘improper’ woman of her bad habits by isolating her from everything she is familiar with. The intentions of this Reconditioning Course then, were



not too distant from those of the reformatories who sought to “recondition” ‘deviant’ and ‘immoral’ women such as prostitutes. In reality the “reconditioning” of unemployed women in Liverpool failed to take off. Out of the first 500 applicants interviewed, only 28 were deemed to “be both willing and suitable” to face the final enrolment panel (ibid: 247). And, only 10 of these were seen as “good enough material” by the panel to enter residential training, with 5 of these 10 eventually withdrawn on medical grounds before the course even began (ibid: 247 ). In interwar Liverpool, not only was it extremely difficult for women to find secure employment, it was also extremely difficult to meet the rigorous criteria necessary to gain adequate assistance and training on re-employment schemes.

The PT, the independent charity who conducted extensive research into the unemployment problem in the late 1930s, read the alarmingly small number of women being accepted on the Reconditioning Course as an indictment of the “poor quality of labour represented by the unemployed women in Liverpool” (ibid: 247 ). That blame was directed at the women as individuals rather than alluding to the structural hostilities and inequalities which plagued Liverpool’s female labour market was somewhat disingenuous, and more importantly glossed over the catalogue of difficulties associated with the unemployment problem.

However, the real significance here lay in the fact that the question of female unemployment in Liverpool generated so much attention, a testament undoubtedly to the severity of the crisis. The thousands of men lining the Dock Road everyday in the hope of securing work was a visual reference to the condition of male unemployment, a “spectacle played out on the streets daily which no one could ignore” (MSRG 1992: 24). Likewise, the vast majority of social surveys, investigations and fictional literature focussing on the depression were very much male-orientated, with the exception of Greenwood’s protagonist Sally Hardcastle, of course. Yet Liverpool seemed to defy this trend. Although women’s unemployment was nowhere near as palpable as their male counterparts, it nevertheless commanded a chapter of its own in The PT’s enquiry entitled *Men Without Work*. As this section seeks to demonstrate, women not only had to contend with the

challenges of a depressed economy, or the habitual problems of seasonal and casual employment, but they were faced with further gender specific – and often gender discriminate – obstructions.

It is difficult to gauge the precise number of women unemployed in Liverpool during the interwar period. It is plausible to assume, however, that within this distinctly male focussed labour market, any figures we have are likely to be conservative, failing to account for the large body of uninsured female workers dependent upon informal employment, and/or married women unable to claim Public Assistance on the basis of their spouse's employment statuses. As MSRG has claimed, "in 1932 only half of working women on Merseyside were in insurable employment" (ibid: 26). The PT inquiry considered the number of unemployed females between the ages of 16 and 64 for three of their six towns, with the term unemployed referring to those in receipt of Unemployment Assistance. The findings were as follows. As of September 1936 Liverpool had a total of 6,463 women unemployed, Blackburn 6,283, and Leicester 3,048. Proportionately, Liverpool's female unemployment problem was far less severe than that of Blackburn's. However, what was particularly acute in Liverpool was the extent of short-term unemployment amongst young women.

TABLE 7. LENGTH OF UNEMPLOYMENT AMONG WOMEN BETWEEN AGES 16-64, 21 SEPTEMBER 1936 (PT 1938: 245).

	Less than 3 months	3-12 months	Over 12 months	Total
Blackburn	2517	1354	2412	6283
Liverpool	4438	1415	610	6463
Leicester	2606	370	72	3048

In Liverpool, almost 69% of the total unemployed women in 1936 had been out of work for less than three months, 22% for three to twelve months, and just 9% for over 12 months. This compared with 40% for less than three months, 22% for three to twelve months, and 38% for over 12 months in Blackburn. The huge pool of short-term unemployed women should not be read as a sign of relative stability compared to Blackburn's long-term unemployment crisis, but rather a situation borne out of the City's tradition of casual and seasonal female work which was exacerbated by the economic slump and which had a unique bearing on the people it affected. As the PT reported, "men and women have grown accustomed to a situation in which they do not

know from day to day whether they will be working or not ... they live in a state of uncertainty which is reflected in their whole outlook on life” (ibid:244 ). In this culture of perpetual instability, casual and informal work was both the problem and the solution. In terms of understanding prostitution within this framework it seems plausible that in the absence of a regular and consistence wage packet for both men and women, combined with the knowledge that some form of work was bound to turn up sooner rather than later, perhaps engaging in prostitution was for a few women a viable short-term means of supplementing an income. However, being an unemployed woman in 1920s and 1930s Liverpool was by no means a standardised condition.

TABLE 8. LENGHT OF UNEMPLOYMENT AMONG WOMEN WORKERS BETWEEN AGES 16-17, JUNE 1936 (PT 1928: 245).

	Less than 3 months	3-12 months	Over 12 months	Total
Blackburn	90	9	-	99
Liverpool	440	101	-	541
Leicester	38	1	-	39

As the above tables demonstrate age was a key determinant in fashioning experiences of unemployment. In 1936 “18% of all unemployed women were under 21 years of age (as contrasted with only 1% in Blackburn), with 8% being in the 16 to 17 age range (ibid: 246). Crucially, of the 541 unemployed 16 and 17 year olds, 81% had been unemployed for less than three months, alluding to an even graver case of short-term unemployment in comparison to the sample as a whole. Of course, in part this alarmingly high figure can be explained by the likelihood that many of the 16 year olds may not have qualified for Unemployment Assistance for a period of more than three months at the time of sampling owing to their young age, but nevertheless it is apparent that youth could be a barrier to gaining employment. It was calculated that by October 1934 “there were 13,000 unemployed young people in Liverpool”, some 12% of the total unemployed figure estimated for 1932 (MSRG 1992: 24). This certainly corresponds with the national picture, a fact that prompted for a number of government enquiries into the problem of youth unemployment throughout the interwar period. Even before the global depression hit, one government committee in the 1920s commented on how, “the disintegrating effect, moral and physical of juvenile unemployment is incalculable ... we doubt whether sufficient attention has been given to the fate of

the boys and girls who live in areas where the staple industries are especially depressed and where the atmosphere is charged with disillusionment and discouragement” (ibid: 22). In a city where the staple industries were overwhelmingly male orientated, young women who lacked the experience and skills of their elders were at a double-disadvantage when competing for work.

Yet age was not only a discriminatory factor for the young. At the opposite end of the scale, older women found themselves to be experiencing a very different kind of unemployment. Long-term unemployment was a problem that affected mostly middle-aged and elderly women in Liverpool. Of the unemployed women who were under 35 years of age, 47% had had some form of employment over the past year, and just 12% had been without work for over two years (PT 1938: 247). However, of those in the 34 to 44 age range half had not worked for more than two years, and for those over 45 years of age the percentage was even higher at three-quarters (ibid: 247). Whereas young women were plagued by the uncertainty of dipping in and out of the labour market on a regular basis, older women were faced with the prospect that they were unlikely to secure any kind of permanent employment again. The PT also drew attention to the constraints of poor health and disability which often impinged upon the employability of older women. For example, the following cases demonstrate the cycle of poverty some women were subjected to as a result of ongoing health issues:

“Cleaner, 58 years, single. Living alone. Last employment 1931 as hospital cleaner. Has very bad rheumatism. Left hand deformed as result of this, but states that she is fit for work. She will never work again, though her efforts are very good” (ibid: 250).

“Cleaner, 55 years. Suffering from bad headache, probably due to very bad teeth. Most of them are out and the remainder are enough to poison her completely. Seeking work as a cleaner, not suitable for any other work. Last worked in May 1934, as public-house cleaner” (ibid: 250).

The other type of older unemployed female noted as exceptionally problematic were those living alone who were unwilling to surrender their homes, possessions and familiar surroundings in order to take some “form of domestic training” as a means of entering residential domestic service (ibid: 251). Once again, the PT emphasised the “grim determination” of the individual woman as if she were foolish in her reluctance to leave behind everything she values, instead of alluding to the

lack of alternative employment opportunities available to her (ibid:251). As we have seen, the willingness, as well as unwillingness, of women to find work could prove to be inconsequential when the age, health and personal circumstances of the individual were at odds with what the labour market demanded.

The common denominator which is woven throughout these aforementioned cases is the regularity with which the unemployed woman was single. Even the PT who at times were particularly critical of the women their study examined, was sympathetic and reasonable in their response to the unemployed single woman. "These single women and elderly women in Liverpool have in many instances been harshly dealt with by life. The War took some of their husbands, or potential husbands, the trade depression threw them out of work, and younger women are preferred... Something could probably be done ... to equip some of them for further employment" (ibid: 251).

Of the women claiming Unemployment Assistance in 1936, 74% were recorded as single (ibid: 246). And, it was the younger women who made up the largest section of this group, with two-thirds of those single being under the age of 35 (ibid: 246). In contrast, just 26% of the women were married, the term which also accounted for widows (9%), and separated or deserted wives (10%), leaving in actuality just 7% of "unemployed married women living with their husbands" (ibid:246). Thus, it would seem that the women most susceptible to unemployment were those young and unskilled, young and single, elderly and in poor health and elderly and single. However, it would be misleading to see marriage as a safeguard to unemployment. Married women were faced with their own unique set of challenges which meant that they did not only have to consider themselves, but also the well-being of their spouses and children, as well as management of the household finances. The relatively low percentage of married women in receipt of Unemployment Assistance does not allow for the consideration of illegibility based upon a husband's work status, the effects of the marriage bar in restricting many forms of higher-paid employment, and the prevalence of informal work as an alternative to claiming assistance during bouts of short-term

unemployment. These are all factors that I will consider now in specific relation to the main forms of female employment in interwar Liverpool.

#### (8:13) Domestic service

Given the access restrictions associated with the census at present, it has only been possible to trace the employment histories and statuses of 8 out of the 27 women. Invariably, these occupations denote those of the eldest prostitutes from the dataset and typically at a point in 1911 which was some 7 years prior to the start of the research period and some 28 years before the end of the period. Thus, the value of these statuses is debatable, although the occupational backgrounds of these women may say something important about the specific difficulties women from particular industries experienced in Liverpool as they aged. Out of the 8 traceable occupations, 3 women had been domestic servants whilst another 1 woman was employed in an auxiliary sector of the domestic industry as a laundress. It is likely that this is a conservative approximation of the actual proportion of the dataset who had had some experience in domestic service, something which is worth bearing in mind as this section highlights the specific employment difficulties associated with this form of labour.

The employment opportunities available to women in interwar Liverpool were considerably more limited than those on offer to her female counterparts throughout the rest of Lancashire. Whereas the 'mill girl' was synonymous with the textile industry of Manchester and its outlying towns, there was no equivalent figure to speak of in Liverpool. Instead, the traditional sector of domestic service remained the dominant form of female work throughout the period. The term 'domestic service' was in itself an extremely vague category which could be used in reference to residential and non-residential servants, daily cleaners of public and private premises carried out by women known locally as 'chars', and cleaners of commercial shops and offices known as 'shawls'. This is without acknowledging the casual forms of labour which can be considered as domestic service, such as the taking in of laundry for neighbours and acquaintances - and other similar errands - which were not recognised as insured work and thus absent from the unemployment statistics. In 1921 the number of local women recorded as working within this sector was approximately 31,000 rising to 38,000 by 1931, although, again these are likely to be conservative

figures (MSRG 1992: 25). Therefore, this was not just the principal female industry in Liverpool, but in spite of the economic downturn it was a ‘boom’ industry.

**Table 7** ‘OCCUPATIONAL ANALYSIS OF WOMEN ON THE LIVE FILE OF THE UNEMPLOYMENT ASSISTANCE BOARD IN LIVERPOOL 1937’ (PT 1938: 245).

Factories	965	34%
Residential and non-residential domestic work	1346	47%
Shop assistants, clerks, commercial travellers, etc.	439	15%
Tailoresses and waitresses	114	4%
	2864	100%

Interestingly, however, as the table above shows domestic servants accounted for the largest percentage per occupation of unemployed women seeking assistance in 1937 (47%), at a time when increasing job opportunities were becoming available in this sector. This disjuncture was a condition felt nationally, with the *Daily Mirror* running an article in the October of 1927 offering a “WAY TO END THE SERVANT FAMINE” (*DM*, 17 October 1927). “While British housewives find it difficult to obtain efficient domestic servants,” the article read, “many girls from the Continent are anxious to enter British homes but are debarred by the Labour Ministry” (*DM*, 17 October 1927). The concept of a ‘servant famine’ certainly does not correspond with what the breakdown of the unemployment figures tell us about the surplus of domestics seeking such work. However, the *Daily Mirror* commentary does allude to the two key reasons why this disparity existed. Firstly, there was the “refusal of British girls to enter domestic service”, and secondly, there was the problem of employers finding suitably skilled and “efficient” women (*DM*, 17 October 1927). These were two factors undoubtedly hindering the absorption of unemployed women into domestic service vacancies in interwar Liverpool, in particular residential-based work.

Although 47% of unemployed females in 1937 were recognised as domestic servants, this did not necessarily equate to 47% of unemployed women looking for, or wanting, work in this sector. In fact, when the PT considered the desired employment of 469 out of the 1,000 women interviewed by the U.A.B. in 1937, it found that just 73 or 15% were willing to consider residential domestic service (PT 1938: 249-50). And, as the PT warned, we should not take this to mean that 15% of unemployed women regarded residential service as their first choice of employment, nor that they had in mind work in private homes, with residency jobs in institutions, hospitals, hotels

and schools being much more alluring (ibid: 250). The Trust estimated that, “it is probable that more than half of these 73 women would not consider domestic work in private houses at all. This fact cannot be ignored and it is due partly to private domestic service having fallen into ill repute” (ibid: 250). Therefore, the problem of female unemployment cannot be understood only as the consequence of what the labour market demands – or not – but must also be seen as shaped by the demands and expectations of those individuals who made up the statistics. The hours were long, unsociable and isolating, the pay was low, working and living conditions could be poor, and domestics often complained of “the lack of freedom and privacy, and above all the lack of a ‘home of one’s own’” (ibid:250). The PT suggested that “the extension of the full benefits of insurance to domestic service and the raising of wages” would help alleviate the negative experiences and perceptions domestics and potential domestics had regarding this type of work (ibid: 251). Indeed, the Labour Ministry rejected the proposal for foreign women with the intention of reconciling the “servant famine” entering the country out of fear that the already extremely low-pay domestics were receiving would be “seriously undercut” (*DM*, 17 October 1927). The issue of pay was not just unappealing in terms of what the domestic could expect to earn, it also had repercussions in terms of what her family could financially lose out on as a consequence of her residential employment. One worried mother in Liverpool told the U.A.B. how on the dole her 22 year old daughter “gets 15s. and I get 13s. out of it”, for housekeeping (PT 1938: 262). The fear was that if her daughter entered residential employment “I would have to give up my home”, as she would no longer be in receipt of housekeep, which often made the crucial difference as to whether a family could sustain their current standard of existence or not (ibid: 262).

For some domestics in Liverpool the low-pay would have been bearable had the social and emotional implications of residency work not been so harsh. The following sobering account of a 21 year old kitchen maid’s experience captures brilliantly the predicament residential employment could have upon their whole existence:

“First of all, one is half a slave; the mistress thinks everything about one’s life is her concern too... And, what is worse, she very often has the power to disturb one’s private life and interests. One is never free. Factory girls have certain working hours and then they are free... On our free day the mistress tells us when we have to be back. One can never have fun or a long dancing night because usually ‘it does not agree with the moral code of the mistress’.



And, you know, in this way we are handicapped in our chances of marriage; we don't have so many chances of meeting men, and when we meet them, there is no way of getting to know them better, for you can't bring a friend in even for a cup of tea... we are only maids, and everybody immediately thinks that we and our friends have dishonest intentions. Do you think it is pleasant to spend one's whole life with people who make one feel inferior to them? the loneliness is another factor, for sometimes it is days before you can speak to somebody who understands you" (ibid: 260).

Interestingly, this young woman claimed that "she liked kitchen work", and took pride in the fact that her employer "had been very satisfied with her and that he hoped to get her back next year" (ibid:261). The problem was that residential labour was not just a profession it was a lifestyle, and one which was fraught with loneliness, constant surveillance and control, class prejudice, dislocation from family and friends, and obstructions to the natural path of maturing, i.e. socialising, courtship and eventually marriage. It is not difficult to imagine given the restraints placed upon the young single domestic's life why there was such a large cohort of elderly domestic spinsters.

In a similar vein, it is easy to comprehend why the domestic servant might have left behind this world of orderliness for a life of perceived disorderliness as a prostitute, and thus why the two have long been associated with one another. In Hall's 1932 investigation she noted how this correlation had international relevance, with "the proportion of those practising prostitution who have formerly been 'domestic servants' always appear[ing] to be large in comparison with recruits from other forms of employment" (Hall 1932: 117-118). In Britain, a register from a Salvation Army rescue home "showed that as many as 88 per cent of reclaimed prostitutes were former servants" (quoted in Bartley 2000: 4). Similarly, a report into common lodging-houses by the London County Council in 1927, claimed that nearly all prostitutes residing in such accommodation "have worked for a few years after leaving school as domestic servants, waitresses, factory hands, etc" (TNA HO45/12663/1927). The employment histories of the women in my dataset indicate that 3 out of the 9 occupations identified were in domestic service, although the actual proportion who had experienced service was likely to be much higher given these instances largely refer to the employment status of those who were of working age at the 1911 census.

Why exactly then institutions seeking to reform the prostitute based their training programs on domesticity, order and routine akin to the domestic situations they were largely seen to have come is one of the greatest paradoxes of prostitution control. Hall understood this relationship as a consequence of emotions, arguing that “isolation and the lack of a full personal life have some bearing on the problem” (Hall 1934: 118). Whilst these factors were certainly at play, the economic advantages to be made from prostitution were pretty alluring too. The evidence from the PT suggests that domestic servants in Liverpool could expect to earn 25 shillings per week or less (PT 1938: 261). In contrast, a prostitute in interwar Liverpool could command anything between £5 per client (including accommodation) and 7/6 in the city centre area, to anything from 4d. upwards in the Irish quarter at the other end of the scale (TNA HO/326/8/56/1927-1928). Therefore, if we take the conservative price of 7/6 as the typical earning potential of a prostitute, then she would have only had to secure three clients per week to make some 5 shillings over what she would have otherwise earned as a domestic – with the added dividends of relative freedom, socialising, agency, and control over ones working hours, and to an extent, working conditions i.e. where she worked and who she solicited. Indeed, the aforementioned enquiry into London’s Common Lodging-Houses reported how “in the houses with graded accommodation the best beds (1s. 6d.) are still mainly occupied by prostitutes and their food is obviously better” (TNA HO45/12663/1927). Thus, as the figures suggest, prostitution was not only a viable means of surviving poverty but could also be a way of transcending it altogether, a sentiment far removed from the observations made by commentators regarding the economics of prostitution as outlined at the start of this section.

#### (8:14) Factory work

The second largest group of unemployed women in interwar Liverpool were those classified as factory workers. In 1937 they accounted for 34% of females claiming unemployment assistance (PT 1938: 248). As already established, in comparison to other industrial centres, factory work was seriously underrepresented in Liverpool, although it remained to be a relatively alluring form of employment for the city’s women, particularly school-leavers. Unlike domestic work, it was seen to be a semi-skilled profession, and one which offered reasonable working hours as well as prospects of socialising and feminine independence. Liverpool was home to many eminent British brands during the early twentieth century, including Tate & Lyle based in Love Lane, Meccano of

Binns Road, Dunlop (which took over the Liverpool Rubber Company in the 1920s) with factories in Speke and Walton, and Johnson's Dye Works of neighbouring Bootle. Ogden's Tobacco Factory (which was later bought out by Imperial Tobacco) opened in Boundary Lane, Everton in 1899, and soon became one of the most prominent factories in Liverpool employing thousands of women over the years largely in the positions of 'tinning up' and packaging. Indeed, one of the women from the dataset was recorded in 1901 as a tobacco packer, presumably at the newly opened Ogden's. The interwar period brought several new openings for female factory jobs with expansions in the confectionary and food processing industries. For example, the Barker and Dobson sweet factory off Breck Road was opened in 1922, producing a million of its trademark Everton Mints a day. However, the contracting export market, combined with the introduction of mass production technology at this time did seriously impact upon the number of female positions available within this industry, as well as downgrading the skill levels of those women lucky enough to secure factory employment. The MSRG has noted how for example, "the introduction of mass-produced ready-made clothing in the thirties saw women increasingly relegated from skilled dressmakers to poorly paid machinist" (MSRG 1992: 26). Interestingly, two of the women whose occupations it has been possible to trace were recorded in the 1911 census to be dressmakers. Without the union representation enjoyed by their male counterparts, female factory workers were frequently the first ones to be deemed superfluous when new machinery and technology was incorporated into the workplace (ibid: 26). The problem of sustainable factory employment for women was signposted by the PT, who noted "that the factory hand who becomes unemployed for some time after she is 18 years old stands little chance of being re-employed in a factory" (PT 1938: 249). Perhaps the two dressmakers from the dataset had experienced employment difficulties in this sector owing to both their advancing age and the introduction of mass-production.

#### (8:15) Casual work and informal economies

As we have seen, the economy of interwar Liverpool was particularly erratic for both the men and women who as individuals and spouses negotiated ways of dealing with, and more importantly, surviving it. However, although the interwar depression aggravated the problem of casual work, exacerbated poverty, and diminished female employment opportunities, as Ayers and Lambertz have argued, "Liverpool's precarious employment structure and the basis of calculating wages in

general had long forced women to develop survival strategies for their households” (Ayers and Lambertz 1986: 199). Engaging in informal female labour had been utilised as a mechanism of supplementing and managing household finances for many years, and was an integral feature of the city’s economic life in spite of its absence within the official employment data and census returns. Indeed, the journalism of Hugh Shimmin had drawn attention to this body of female workers from as early as the 1850s, although given Shimmin’s fascination with the salacious it typically referred to the “armies of prostitutes” as oppose to the more archetypal charwoman, the kindling-seller, washerwoman and money lender (Walton 1991: 11). If, as the statistics suggest, just 7% of married women were in receipt of unemployment assistance in 1937, an examination of alternative female economies, I argue, allows us not only to understand why the statistics were so low amongst this group, but more importantly to appreciate how in reality marriage was by no means a buttress to poverty.

Typically, working women in Liverpool dropped out of the formal labour market – and thus the official records - at the point of marriage, although it is evident that for the majority marriage did not signal the end of their employment activity. As the research of Ayers and Lambertz has revealed, with marriage came new financial pressures and psychological challenges. The responsibility of “making ends meet” was one which ultimately lay with both the husband as ‘breadwinner’ and the wife as ‘financial wizard,’ although the evidence suggests that “women tended to take a disproportionate share of the financial problems on their shoulders” (Ayers and Lambertz 1986: 211). Surviving was not simply a matter of ensuring enough money passed through the household in any given week or month, but was further complicated by the expectation of each spouse to fulfil their allocated gender role as either breadwinner or financial manager as prescribed by themselves, one another, their community’s and wider society. The husband on passing over his wage packet to his wife – whether it be in its entirety or after deducting “something for his back pocket” – was to all intents and purposes absolved from his responsibility, whereas the wife’s duties had only just began (ibid: 213). In a culture where men could be in work one week and out of it the next there was a particular premium placed upon a wife’s aptitude to manage the households finances for the present and the unknown future. It was this paradox between material need to survive and emotional pressure to succeed as a spouse and marital unit which made

informal employment such an integral part of working-class life in interwar Liverpool. Female strategies for “making ends meet” could vary between the legitimate and not so legitimate dependent upon individual preference and circumstances, although as Ayers and Lambertz have suggested it is hardly surprising that “potentially more activities became more acceptable among and for women in periods of severe economic crisis” (ibid: 202). Thus, supplementing finances could be achieved through “gambling, playing the pools, pawning, being a bookie’s ‘cocky’ (look-out), nicking, and accepting items stolen from the docks,” as well as the more ‘respectable’ methods of taking in lodgers, having co-op membership, “going cleaning, sewing, hawking, flower-selling, all types of home-work, and taking in laundry” (ibid: 202-203). However, it was the prevalence of reticence, secrecy and discreetness between spouses when it came to involvement in informal work which forms the most illuminating aspect of Ayers and Lambertz oral testimonies. One woman recalled how she would travel by tram to the new housing estates on the outskirts of town to collect waste wood cut-offs, which she would bring home, chop up, bundle, hide in the yard, and then sell them in another part of the city the following day where no one knew her. The lengths she went to in order to avoid detection were entirely motivated by her desire to preserve the faith her husband had in her as a good ‘financial wizard,’ as well as the pressures within her community to meet her marital obligations; “My husband would have been mortified if he’d known what I did – he always boasted what a good manager I was and I wouldn’t have wanted people roundabout to know – but I just couldn’t cope sometimes – the shame was something terrible” (ibid: 203).

Mutual secrecy between spouses over finances was key to achieving expectations of each other and marriage in general. Secrecy enabled man and wife to engineer ingenious means of making or supplementing a household's wage without being perceived to challenge or upset ideals whilst also avoiding feelings of personal inadequacy and/or accusations of blame. Through such tactics notions of masculinity and femininity were being protected and reinforced at a time when the economy was threatening to disturb them. During times of exacerbated poverty it would seem then, that the pressures placed upon a woman to achieve both the material and discursive ideals of marriage as prescribed by society, her spouse, and more crucially herself, were far from moderated. In this

culture, informal female employment was considered to be a viable, acceptable and potentially lucrative alternative to what was being offered by an increasingly restrictive official labour market.

In 1938, The PT reflected upon how twenty years of unrelenting economic decline had affected Liverpool's working-class psyche, concluding that "there is consequently a complete lack of solidarity" (PT 1938:244). This notion of a defeated and divided working populace, a broken and dissonant community, certainly corroborates with the argument that these years witnessed the inception of the city's descent from "'world city' to 'city' over the course of the twentieth century" (Wilks-Heeg 2003: 36). However, as the evidence proves, and I have sought to demonstrate, in the face of a particularly hostile economic climate, Liverpool's working-classes continually negotiated the difficulties which plagued them on a daily basis.

For a small minority of women, prostitution would have offered an increasingly feasible means of navigating the economic difficulties apportioned upon them during the interwar period. The tradition of secrecy which underpinned alternative female work combined with the likelihood that an ephemeral or one-off spell as a prostitute would not have led to an arrest (given that in order to make an arrest a woman must be known to be a 'common prostitute'), meant that at times of acute economic struggle the potential returns were more likely seen to outweigh the risks. Of course, for the majority of Liverpool's women it is fair to assume that no matter how dire their financial situations became they would never have entertained the possibility of prostitution. At the same time, there would have existed a cohort of women whose motives for engaging in prostitution were completely detached from the economic climate, driven instead by alcohol dependency and/ or simply inclination. However, in spite of the economic crisis beleaguering interwar Liverpool, anxieties surrounding prostitution increasingly referred to the woman who was guided by want rather than need. The 'amateur' prostitute or 'good-time girl' acted out of what Dr. Wilson referred to in 1913 as "vanity or love of pleasure", seeking expensive clothes, theatre trips and general luxuries which any normal wage could not have afforded them (*The Athenaeum*, 4633/1918:378). Although the amateur was influenced by a different kind of financial lure to the regular prostitute, she too was a product of the environment in which she lived. As new forms of consumerism, entertainment, leisure and mass marketing unfolded at this time, the ability to share in these

enticing possibilities for many women could only be reconciled through means other than regular employment. Therefore, some young girls had the realisation that “no wages will ever supply luxury and comparative wealth to the same extent that a woman can gain them by the sale of herself” (ibid: 378). In such a way, the narrative of immorality and depravity which had once dominated Victorian perceptions of the professional prostitute was shifting to increasingly refer to the amateur.

#### (8:16) Location at death, life expectancies and concluding thoughts

This core analytical part of this thesis concludes by considering both the age and the localities of the prostitutes from the dataset at the point of death in order to assess whether their involvement in prostitution and the criminal justice interventions they experienced had any long-term implications upon their broader lives. As the findings of this chapter hitherto have demonstrated, in spite of contemporary anxieties which constructed the prostitute as a threat to the institutions of marriage and motherhood – and thus transformed prostitution from a peripheral act of the underworld to one that undermined and/or challenged hegemonic heterosexual ideals – in actuality prostitution did not appear to impinge upon a woman’s ability to marry and to a lesser extent to bear children. Furthermore, as we have seen, in certain cases it was a woman’s involvement in these heterosexual institutions of marriage and motherhood which seemingly motivated women to enter prostitution, and in this respect the idea of ‘threat’ worked both ways. Ultimately, the evidence has espoused a nuanced picture of the personal lives of prostitutes which moves beyond rigid notions of marginality and challenges both the idea of ‘social displacement’ forwarded by contemporary regulatory bodies such as the LWPP and the concept of an ‘outcast group’ which has dominated the historiography. Although, one must appreciate the context from which Walkowitz’s theory of an ‘outcast group’ was based, and thus perhaps the broader experiences of my dataset reflect the disjuncture between how Liverpool’s interwar prostitutes were dealt with by the CJS – at worst experiencing short-term imprisonment – and those earlier prostitutes dealt with under the C.D. Acts, who at worst were removed from their communities and detained for up to two years. Crucially, in interwar Liverpool court proceedings against prostitutes were rarely detailed in the local newspapers, and thus it is feasible – particularly in the cases of less prolific offenders – that their families and communities had little awareness of their involvement in prostitution.

The average age of the dataset at death was 69.5 years, with the oldest surviving to 97 and the youngest dying at 37. In fact, only 3 of the 27 surveyed died under the age of 50, with 8 living to 80 years and over. If we take the average collective age at departing the CJS (inclusive of one-off offenders) which has been calculated at 34 years and combine it with the average age at death, on average a woman lived a further 35.5 years after leaving the CJS, perhaps further evidence that typically prostitution did not have a detrimental impact upon the long-term health of these women and that prostitution represented a short-term phase within their broader life cycles. For example, if we contextualise the average offending span of the dataset which has been calculated as 6 years against the average age of death then it transpires that prostitution only represented 8.6% of their lifetime. Of course, there are anomalies to these averages. Jessie Fitzwilliam, for example, died during the research period itself at the age of 49, literally a matter of months following her only arrest for the offence of brothel-keeping.

Whilst issues of census availability currently inhibit us tracing the geographical evolution of these women at regular intervals over the course of their lives, by determining the location of their deaths we can critically examine if and in which way their involvement in prostitution had a bearing upon their geographical movements. 16 or 59% of the dataset died in Liverpool, with a further 3 dying in nearby Birkenhead, Wirral. 5 died in outlying towns of Liverpool both within the bounds of Merseyside and bordering Cheshire, including Ormskirk, St. Helens and Warrington. 1 woman died in Blackpool and another in Manchester, whilst the remaining woman died the furthest away from Liverpool in Northamptonshire. Largely, then, these women remained for the duration of their lives within Liverpool or the North-West of England. The cases where women did move out of Liverpool tend to reflect broader migratory movements out of Liverpool, such as the popularity of pensioners to relocate to Blackpool and the shift from the mid-twentieth onwards of families out of Liverpool to the nearby new-towns of, for example, Ormskirk in search of a better quality of life. The woman who died in Northamptonshire had, incidentally, originated from that part of the country, as did her husband, and it would seem that they relocated away from Liverpool together.



Whilst we cannot *know* but merely speculate, it would appear that a woman's involvement in prostitution did not result in geographical displacement, although it may well have lead to 'social displacement' in the form of family and community ostracism. This is a perfect reminder that whilst we can attempt to move the gaze further towards the micro-level by looking at individual experiences as this final section has sought to do so we would do well to remember that frequently we cannot know but merely speculate, and that working at the individual level does not necessarily mean working at the personal or literal level. We cannot know, for example, that Winifred Lindop entered prostitution following the emotional strains of losing her baby, or that Catherine Garrity did so as a result of being deserted by her husband. Did Ivy Duckworth engage in prostitution during her mid-to-late thirties because she was unable to find work in her traditional employment of domestic service as she became older? By searching for the voice of the past prostitute we may find ourselves reconstructing a rather inaccurate or crude one. This is why this thesis has focused upon recovering the historical rather than literal voice of the prostitute, and why the stylistic approach has consciously chosen to be exploratory rather than assertive. Essentially, the links have been highlighted but never underlined.

In the early hours of Christmas morning, 1919, two young messengers from the Union Telegraph Cable Company made a grim discovery as they entered Convent Garden, the secluded and narrow passageway which connected Water Street and Chapel Street. “Lying in a pool of blood” was the nude and “severely bruised” body of Elizabeth McDermott, a fifty-four year-old “woman of the unfortunate class” who also went by the name of Isabella Wilson (*LEE*, 27 December 1919). This investigation got underway by illuminating how a series of episodes converged in interwar Liverpool to give the impression that this was a city which had unequivocally departed from its late-Victorian moniker as the “worst town in England for prostitutes,” and indeed for prostitution (Mynott 1995:431). Not only were the criminal statistical returns for prostitution offences declining at an unprecedented rate over the course of the research period, but institutions such as the Liverpool Female Penitentiary which had for over a century been integral to the city’s apparatus of control were quickly disappearing, whilst Liverpool’s official regulators were receiving accolade on the national stage for keeping their streets “in good order and decency” (TNA HO/326/7/9/1928). One could argue that McDermott’s personal demise marked the onset of a broader demise in street prostitution in Liverpool at this time. Indeed, between the time of her murder in 1919 and 1936 (the last year in which prostitution and brothel offences appeared as separate crime categories in the returns) proceedings for solicitation had fallen by 98% in the city, with Liverpool having gone from accounting for 17.5% of street prostitution offences in England and Wales to just 0.3 % between these years. Similarly, it can be purported that McDermott’s death symbolised a fault-line between the ‘old type’ of palpable Victorian street prostitute who polluted the cityscape and the new type of ‘respectable’ and ‘well-appointed’ off-street prostitute who was understood to blend into it. At this juncture, McDermott would have no doubt been considered as part of the last frontier of what Walkowitz has termed as the “quintessential female figure of the [Victorian] urban scene” (Walkowitz 1992: 21). Certainly, these signs of decline and improvement neatly accord with broader historiographical assumptions surrounding feminine sexual deviancy which have tended to position the interwar period as a time of stability and restraint sandwiched

between the upheaval of the two world wars and emerging from the shadows of Victorian depravity.

Yet, it has been the overarching aim of this thesis to critically examine just how far and fast prostitution was actually declining in the context of Liverpool, and in doing so to question some of the prevailing scholarly assumptions which have surfaced with regards to interwar feminine sexual deviance and crime more broadly. In extending the analytical gaze beyond the smokescreen of statistical improvement it has been possible to make sense of *the* key paradox which has lay at the core of this investigation; why in the midst of unparalleled ‘decline’ was prostitution - both nationally and locally - not only ‘symbolically central’ but also politically, legally and culturally central? As the findings of this thesis have signalled, and this concluding chapter seeks to rearticulate, the concept of decline is not only debatable but as an analytical lens it tends to obfuscate the route prostitution unfolded along in interwar Liverpool. Taking Weeks’ depiction of the complex societal mood of interwar Britain as the starting point, this thesis has illuminated how prostitution found itself caught up in, guided by and conducive to, this discordant state whereby the politics of sexuality was at once post-Victorian yet still “clearly pre-permissive,” informed as much by its “exposure to the felt needs of the time” as by the “series of moral codes and practices” inherited from the nineteenth century” (Weeks 1981: 200). As Weeks has warned, “to conceptualise the whole period as transitional is to avoid a whole catalogue of difficult problems – and to assume that [the] ascent to liberalism followed a straightforward trajectory” (ibid:199). As the findings of this study have demonstrated, to conceptualise interwar prostitution exclusively in terms of decline and improvement is to both overlook a whole catalogue of complexities which transpired at this moment, and to assume that interwar prostitution was completely distinct from its nineteenth century past and disengaged from the conditions experienced during the two world wars which it immediately followed and preceded.

By pursuing a structure which examined four key thematic layers – representations, regulation, experiences and socio-economic climate – this thesis has offered a comprehensive analysis of interwar prostitution. Moreover, by unearthing the complex interactions between these paradigms it has highlighted the value in looking across the spectrum of prostitution as oppose to examining

them in isolation from one another. The first thematic layer of this investigation focussed upon charting the key political, legal and popular discourses of prostitution at both the national and local level. Chapter three revealed how the short-lived wartime provision 40d had an enduring influence over the route political and legal conceptualisations of prostitution unfolded along over the course of the interwar period. It served as a prelude to the increasing attention placed upon amateur prostitution within the political and legal domains, of how the programme of reconstruction was to position the sexual morality of the individual as indicative to the health of the societal body long after the Armistice, and to the agitations the legislative treatment of prostitutes was to provoke in the decade following the war. Thus, it is hardly surprising that prostitution remained a source of concern in the face of declining national and local criminal statistics given that political and legal attention had by this stage extended its focus to encompass amateur prostitution, which, crucially, did not feature in the official returns. Concurrently, lobbying groups were mobilised to push for a governmental review into the solicitation laws based upon concerns over how exactly professionals were being dealt with by the CJS as oppose to how many. Focussing upon the heavy-handedness of the police, the intrinsic sexual double standard of the law, and the implications of legislatively classifying women as ‘common prostitutes’, the campaigns of organisations such as the AMSH collided with a series of high-profile policing scandals in the twenties to result in the establishment of the SOC (1927-1928). Whilst the SOC placed a premium on deliberating the above contentions, proceedings also threw light on the continued problems and frustrations experienced by local regulators in spite of the overall move towards decline. The official regulators from Liverpool, for example, placed a premium upon delineating how the habitual prostitute although operating in fewer numbers remained acutely problematic given that the existing maximum penalties were doing little to deter her from offending time and again. Thus, an interesting dynamic was able to surface whereby the praise the SOC gave Liverpool for its colossally declining statistics was somewhat negated by the enduring difficulties the women who remained engaged in prostitution presented to the local CJS; decline did not instinctively equate with improvement. In the end no legislative amendments actually arose from the recommendations forwarded by the SOC, and thus power remained very much in the hands of the local CJS and the regulatory bodies. For Liverpool’s prostitutes it was invariably the policies of the police, the courts, and the unofficial regulators in the

local context which shaped their experiences of control. However, the SOC – and to a lesser extent the RCPPP (1928) – did prove to have some bearing upon the experiences of Liverpool's prostitutes as it was widely recognised that the spotlight such reviews placed upon the policing of prostitution translated into a tendency for police inertia from the late twenties onwards. Whilst inertia was arguably the safest card for the police to play at this juncture where they had to negotiate an increasingly difficult terrain in the pursuit to appease the public, the press and the magistrates, inertia could only mask rather than address the more enduring structural inequalities of the law and the extent of prostitution which remained on Liverpool's streets.

Chapter four moved away from the political and legal domains to survey how prostitution was represented more broadly in interwar Britain. Just as chapter three shone light on the increasing attention placed upon amateur prostitution at this time, it is clear that interwar prescriptions regarding the causes and problems of prostitution were increasingly framed with the amateur in mind. This in turn had significant implications upon how prostitution *per se* was conceptualised, as narratives of individual greed surpassed narratives of individual need, and glossed over the more enduring associations between prostitution and structural female poverty. Similarly, as discourses of white slavery subsided following the 1912 CLA, ideas of female passivity and victimhood gave way to sexological theorising which positioned prostitutes as sexually assertive women. Again, in this climate associations between prostitution and poverty became diluted. Moreover, set against the backdrop of post-war reconstruction, the interwar prostitute was constructed as a dangerous figure whose individual actions were seen to undermine the coveted interwar ideals of domesticity (most notably marriage and motherhood). As these discourses reveal, the declining criminal statistics were somewhat irrelevant at a time when prostitution was seen to be branching out and transforming, and was understood to be so patently at odds with the programme of reconstruction. Once more, decline did not necessarily translate as improvement.

Section three examined the regulation of prostitution in the local context. Chapter five focussed upon the front-line policing of prostitution by the LCPF, building on the analysis provided in chapter three regarding the judging of Liverpool's prostitutes in the court arena. It was revealed how the LCPF pursued a policy of management and containment – as oppose to eradication –

whereby police activity was intrinsically linked to the visibility of vice to the public at large. This resulted in the construction of three distinct types of prostitutes; the ‘hardened offender’, the ‘respectable’ professional, and the ‘good-time girl’. Unsurprisingly, policing policies varied between these groups, ranging from the relative toleration of ‘respectable’ prostitutes who operated away from the city’s streets, to the active policing of the ‘hardened offenders’ who continued to patronise the streets in much the same way as their Victorian predecessors had done so. Importantly, the ‘good-time girl’ – otherwise known as the amateur and unknown woman soliciting – was for the first time being legislatively dealt with in Liverpool under the LCA from 1921. Whereas the CJS saw the TPCA and the VA as a means to remove the worst offenders from the city’s streets for a limited period – and thus protecting the public from her annoyance and potential contamination – the LCA was exercised to protect young amateurs themselves from the influence of the professional and deter them from embarking upon a life of professional prostitution. Crucially, from 1926 the number of amateurs dealt with under the LCA consistently outweighed the number of professionals dealt with under the solicitation laws, a lucid indication of the changing prostitution cultures and policing policies in Liverpool at this moment. For many commentators, the interwar period witnessed a straightforward substitution of professional prostitution for amateur prostitution, and certainly the statistical evidence suggests this holds weight. However, by paying attention to the offending trajectories of Liverpool’s interwar professionals it has been uncovered how from the early thirties an informal culture of concealment emerged, whereby the court registers were increasingly recording ‘common prostitutes’ who had been caught for soliciting under the guise of other public disorder offences – namely drunkenness and the LCA – whilst still dispensing punishments in line with those traditionally used to deal with soliciting. Thus, not only is the rate of decline seriously questionable, but the use of the LCA to deal exclusively with unknown women soliciting is unlikely. This chapter also shed light on the sexual geography of prostitution in interwar Liverpool, and in doing so has challenged some of the enduring myths about prostitution being concentrated in the docks. It has also revealed a shift in prostitution at this time away from Lime Street and up into the Toxteth area of the city, a shift which has traditionally understood to have taken place in the fifties. Moreover, by comparing the activity of professional and amateur prostitutes it has indicated that the notion of amateurs forcing

professionals away from their traditional haunts is over simplistic, although the reasoning behind this becomes evident in chapter seven (see below). Whilst clearly the professional persisted into the period, on the one hand her decline was exaggerated by the informal policies of the LCPF, on the other it was moderated by the fact that amateur prostitution was to a certain degree counteracting this decline. Again, decline did not necessarily equate with improvement.

Chapter six moved away from the official sphere to chart the evolution of the unofficial landscape of prostitution control. By examining the part the LWPP and the LJAPGW played in the regulation of Liverpool's prostitutes, it demonstrated how by the early twentieth century unofficial organisations were taking a more proactive approach to prostitution control by carrying out preventive work in the streets as oppose to their traditional reactive work in residential reform institutions. Whilst the LWPP and the LJAPGW did not have the legislative capabilities of the LCPF, in closely emulating police work by patrolling the streets and acting as witnesses in court, Liverpool's interwar prostitutes were subjected to a level of surveillance never before experienced. Indeed, the LWPP's emphasis upon observation has resulted in rich documentary evidence detailing prostitution cultures and activities that would invariably have been overlooked had they been equipped with legislative powers at this time. Most notably, their detailed accounts of the different geographies of prostitution has enabled us to determine how prostitute activity varied between locales, as did wages, whilst as seen with regards to the continued activity in Chinatown at the very time the court registers suggested it had disappeared acts as a perfect reminder of the limitations of the official records. For the LWPP their role in the regulation of prostitution became central to their campaign for inauguration into the LCPF. This politicisation of prostitution ensured that in spite of the declining statistics, prostitution never strayed far from the local political agenda. For the LJAPGW, regulating prostitution fitted into a broader pursuit to preserve the reputation of the Jewish community. Subsequently, although alike to the LWPP they existed as an organisation which sought to provide practical support to prostitute women, such as finding employment opportunities and suitable accommodation, interestingly those women who failed or refused to benefit from these early interventions frequently found themselves facing far more extreme punishments than those which would ever be dispensed by the CJS. As we have seen, this could take the form of transportation, lengthy periods of residential care, resulting in a level of social

displacement not seen with CJS punishments. Evidently, nineteenth century methods of control could still be traced within distinctly twentieth century organisations. Moreover, the absence of legislative powers in no way rendered the LWPP and the LJAPGW powerless. Indeed, in intercepting women and girls in the streets, the net of control was extending as girls who would have traditionally faced intervention at a later stage in their offending careers – or possibly never at all – were now under the gaze of both the police and the unofficial patrollers. It is likely that in intercepting some women before they came into contact with the CJS the tactics of these organisations actively contributed to the declining criminal statistics.

Section four examined the final and most important thematic layer of this investigation; prostitute experiences. By unearthing the key experiences of Liverpool's interwar prostitutes as an offending group and as individuals this section not only reconciled one of the key methodological limitations levelled against the existing literature, but it provided a platform from which to critically re-examine some of the dominant themes which emerged over the course of this investigation from those who were mobilised to talk about, conceptualise and regulate them. Chapter seven focussed upon prostitute experiences within the CJS. It established how in spite of national discourses and local regulatory accounts which constructed a dichotomy between the professional and amateur prostitute, in reality there were few points of distinction between them. For example, whilst representations of the amateur focussed upon her relative young age compared to the older professional, the evidence from the court registers across the research period shows how on average the amateur appearing in court was 34 years old whereas her professional counterpart was on average a year younger at 33 years. Moving on to examine the offending trajectories of 167 prostitutes, it transpired that this lack of distinction between the two figures was not necessarily indicative of prostitute cultures existing in the streets, but rather the fact that the LCPF frequently used the LCA to deal with women who had extensive offending histories as professionals. This haphazard implementation of the LCA also explains why the sexual geography of amateur prostitution was not that dissimilar to that of the professional cohort. Crucially, the cross-legislative treatment of these women seriously challenges how far and fast prostitution was disappearing from Liverpool's streets by the thirties. By reconsidering the offending trajectories of professional prostitutes in light of their additional arrests under the LCA it emerges that some 42%



of the cohort continued to offend into the thirties whereas based upon only their treatment as professionals only 29% were seen to continue offending beyond the twenties. Applying the same principle to offending spans, it is evident that Liverpool's prostitutes were offending for longer periods than they first would appear to be doing so; from 5.6 years on average when only considering legislation under the TPCA and VA to 7.9 years when adding legislative experiences under the LCA to the equation. Whilst it is clear that arrests against prostitutes were declining throughout the period and had reached unprecedented lows by the mid-thirties, by shedding light on these legislative nuances it emerges that the extent of decline was not as extreme as it initially appears to be.

Chapter eight set about exploring the offending and personal lives of 27 interwar prostitutes. As laid out in the introductory section, one of the key anticipations of this thesis was to answer Scott's call for scholars to not only recover histories of marginality, but to critically examine how exactly "categories like marginal/central, normal/abnormal are made in the first place" (quoted in Cocks and Houlbrook 2006: 6). As it transpired, not only did the methodological approach of this investigation facilitate these aims, but crucially, the comprehensive and interactive nature of this framework made it possible to question just how appropriate, rigid and relevant these dichotomies of marginality and deviance really are to the story of interwar prostitution and the experiences of interwar prostitutes. In charting how exactly prostitution featured within and impacted upon these women's broader life stories this chapter offers an alternative reading to dominant contemporary – and at times scholarly – assumptions about the prostitute. Firstly, by tracing the locales of the dataset at birth a compelling picture emerged whereby prostitution was a trade in interwar Liverpool overwhelmingly engaged in by local women born within the city. This dramatically departed from historical and popular conceptualisations of the city's prostitution trade being overrepresented by Irish women, whilst highlighting the dangers involved in applying nineteenth century phenomena to the context of the interwar period. Similarly, the immediate heritage of the dataset – i.e. parentage – revealed that the majority of women had been born to parents who had also been born in the city, and thus whilst it is difficult to know for certain the ethnicity of these women it is probable that prevailing theories which positioned prostitution as a trade

disproportionally engaged in by black and mixed-race girls in interwar Liverpool did not accord with the reality. Moving on to explore the dataset's experiences of marriage and motherhood it was shown how largely prostitute women did share in these heterosexual ideals, and at times it was actually the failure of these institutions – i.e. separation, widowhood and the death of child – which lead women into prostitution, whilst for other women their very involvement in prostitution appears to be based upon their desire to maintain these heterosexual ideals – i.e. a marriage and children – rather than challenge and/or resist them. These are the complexities which emerge when the analytical gaze moves beyond what was said by commentators, politicians and regulators to uncover what was actually experienced by prostitute women themselves. One of the greatest ironies to surface over the course of this investigation has been how at the very time Liverpool was gripped by economic depression narratives which positioned prostitution as an activity engaged in out of economic necessity were largely mute. The analysis of Liverpool's interwar economy revealed how the city's female labour market had historically been precarious, offering little in the way of either diversity or stability. Subsequently, casual labour activities had long been engaged in as a means to supplement and manage household finances, and by the interwar period was an integral feature of the city's economic life. Although we can never know for certain, it is probable that for some women experiencing economic difficulties, periodic spells in prostitution provided them with a means through which to survive in the absence of the safeguard of welfare provisions or alternative labour options. Finally, this chapter concluded by establishing the age and locations of the dataset at the point of death. The average age of the dataset at death was 69.5 years, with the oldest surviving to 97 and the youngest dying at 37. Seemingly, prostitution did not have a detrimental impact upon the long-term health of prostitutes, and represented a brief period within their broader life cycles. Largely, women remained for the duration of their lives within Liverpool (59% of the dataset) or alternatively within the North-West of England. It would appear then that a woman's involvement in prostitution did not result in geographical displacement. Whilst we cannot know whether women's engagement in the trade resulted in social displacement, it is likely given the identified locations at death and the fact that prostitution typically represented a short-period within women's lives, that prevailing scholarly assumptions regarding social displacement and dislocation hold little weight in the context of interwar Liverpool.

In 1999 Gilfoyle lamented how historians of prostitution face an unavoidable paradox whereby “the more they ‘know’ prostitution, the less they actually understand it” (Gilfoyle 1999:140). Reflecting upon the scope of this thesis, and more precisely the avenues of enquiry left unexplored, Gilfoyle’s observation certainly holds some weight. Whilst this thesis has laid down the foundations of academic research into prostitution in interwar Liverpool, and identified it as a vibrant research area, the possibilities for future research to examine some of the tropes covered in this investigation in more depth and to pursue new areas of enquiry are rich. The racialization of prostitution and sexual immorality is a theme which has periodically arisen throughout this investigation, and one which at times has been critically examined and ultimately challenged. That said, as the home of Britain’s first Chinese community, future research would do well to focus more explicitly upon prostitution activity within Chinatown, establishing if and in what way prostitution was linked to broader criminal activity within this locale (most notably the gambling dens and opium cartels the court registers show were so frequently raided by the LCPF at this time), and exploring the process of miscegenation and integration we know to be taking hold and subsequently dispersing the Chinese away from Chinatown in the interwar period.

When contrasted with Slater’s research of prostitution in interwar London, a line of enquiry which has largely been mute from this study has been that regarding male involvement in prostitution at an organised level (see Slater 2007a and 2008). Indeed, the documentary evidence suggests that pimps and bullies did not feature in Liverpool at this time. Women tended to operate independently, occasionally with other women, and where there were instances of male procurement or compliance this tended to be between spouses or partners. As we have seen, Liverpool was the only city within the early 1920s enquiry into the payment of prostitute fines at prisons by disreputable people whereby these payments were made exclusively by women. It would be worthwhile pursuing this trope further, examining when exactly men became involved in Liverpool’s prostitution culture, if and in which way this involvement contributed to the commercialization of prostitution, as well as exploring more critically the presence of women as procurers and bullies in the interwar period. Likewise, no time has been given to ascertaining

whether a culture of male prostitution existed in the city, and if so how it was represented, regulated and experienced.

Whilst this investigation has illuminated other crimes engaged in by Liverpool's prostitutes – specifically drunkenness, assault and criminal damage – given the sheer volume of Liverpool's court registers it has only been possible to record the crimes committed in conjunction with a prostitution offence. Thus, tracing the broader criminal trajectories of interwar prostitutes would add a valuable dimension to this study, enabling us to understand what other crimes prostitutes engaged in, what proportion of prostitutes had cross-offending records, and to pinpoint where exactly prostitution featured in the course of women's offending lives. Indeed, this tendency to study prostitution in isolation from other forms of crime has been an enduring limitation of the British historiography. By constructing a methodology which has facilitated detailing activity at the individual rather than the collective level, this investigation has made it clear that pursuing a more lateral examination of female crime is feasible.

As the interwar period drew to a close familiar anxieties regarding the public sexual behaviour of women in Liverpool surfaced with the advent of the Second World War. The local press was full of tales about scores of young girls descending upon military camps and the city's stations, of prostitutes soliciting in air raid shelters and capitalising upon the reduced visibility afforded by the blackouts, all of which closely echoed the concerns which had troubled the city's regulators some twenty-five years or so earlier during the Great War. Once again, concerns centred on the dangerous physical and moral behaviour of 'young amateurs'. As early as 1939, for example, the LWPP noted their fear that these amateurs were frequently as young as 13, whereas in 1914 "they were thought to be young at 18" (LRO H3645/WOM/1939). Crucially however, as this thesis has illustrated, the figure of the amateur was not one specific to the conditions of war. Whilst anxieties surrounding the amateur were undeniably more acute within the local press during the First and Second World Wars, they had remained a constant source of concern for Liverpool's regulators throughout the intervening years. Indeed, so pronounced were these concerns between the wars that the amateur had come to both dominate political and popular discourses of

prostitution at the national level, whilst in the local context amateurs found themselves being legislatively dealt with for the first time under the LCA. Of course, what we now know is that the LCA became an increasingly convenient means through which the LCPF could legislatively regulate the professional whilst maintaining, and ultimately exaggerating, the impression of a declining prostitution problem. Therefore, we also know that the women who appeared in court as amateurs were frequently at odds with the type of women popularly and politically conceptualised on the national stage, particularly in terms of their age and their offending histories. In this sense, Gilfoyle's observation regarding the paradox facing scholars of historical prostitution does not entirely ring true. This investigation has not only facilitated a more nuanced understanding of the shades of interwar prostitution, but it has also extended our geographical knowledge beyond the context of London and offered a viable methodological framework through which to explore the layer so frequently missing from histories of prostitution, the histories of prostitutes themselves.



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